



# GRASS PITCH IMPROVEMENT FUND

## Grass Pitch Improvement Fund (GPIF) 2024 - Guidance Notes for Applicants

### 1. **About the Fund**

- 1.1 The Grass Pitch Improvement Fund (GPIF) aims to tackle inequalities by providing improved access to good quality, safe playing facilities for targeted groups.
- 1.2 Priority will be given to applications which support cricket for the following groups:
  - Women's and girls' cricket.
  - Cricket in diverse communities.
  - Disability cricket.
  - Low socio-economic groups (LSEG).
- 1.3 Investment will be targeted into three main areas:
  - Improving the quality of squares and outfielders (for grass pitches rated 'unsuitable' or 'basic' to improve to at least 'good').
  - Creating sustainable management of sites (through irrigation and machinery improvements).
  - Installing hybrid pitches to increase playing capacity.
- 1.4 The Sport England Lottery Fund will provide funding for projects in England.
- 1.5 The England and Wales Cricket Trust (EWCT), a wholly owned charitable subsidiary of England and Wales Cricket Board Limited (ECB), will provide funding for projects in Wales. In these Guidance Notes, references to the ECB shall be interpreted as references to the EWCT for funding to be provided by the EWCT.
- 1.6 Where an Organisation considers that it is unable to accept Lottery Funding for constitutional reasons (e.g. religious constraint), it should identify this to ECB in the application. ECB is able to provide alternative charitable funding from the EWCT where this is a constraint and, for the avoidance of doubt, this request will not prejudice the application process in any way.
- 1.7 The fund will run until March 2027, or whenever funding is fully allocated, whichever is sooner.

### 2. **Project Identification**

- 2.1 To identify suitable projects, prior to submission of an application, all organisations will need to arrange for a County Pitch Adviser (CPA) to conduct a site visit to assess the current Performance Quality Standard (PQS) of the grass cricket pitch.
- 2.2 The CPA will produce a report using the PitchPower Pro app, which will include a PQS rating for the square and outfield, and recommendations to improve the PQS rating(s) to at least 'good'.

- 2.3 Only organisations which receive ratings of 'unsuitable' or 'basic' will be able to apply for GPIF funding.
- 2.4. Organisations which receive a higher rating of 'good', 'advanced' or high' may apply for an [England and Wales Cricket Trust \(EWCT\) Interest Free Loan](#) instead, should they wish to do so.

<b>Square and Outfield PQS Rating</b>	<b>Can apply for a GPIF Grant</b>	<b>Can apply for an EWCT Interest Free Loan</b>
Unsuitable	✓	✓
Basic	✓	✓
Good	x	✓
Advanced	x	✓
High	x	✓

- 2.5 To arrange a CPA site visit, organisations will need to contact the local County Cricket Board (CCB) or Cricket Foundation (CF). The CCB or CF will also confirm the cost of a site visit in your area, which will need to be paid for by the organisation. Contact details for the CCB or CF can be found at: <https://www.ecb.co.uk/play/county-cricket-boards>

### 3. **Eligibility**

- 3.1 The fund is open to cricket clubs and other organisations affiliated to the ECB via their local CCB or CF, or that affiliate to the ECB nationally via the African Caribbean Cricket Association (ACCA) or National Asian Cricket Council (NACC).
- 3.2 In addition, the ECB, CCBs or CFs may solicit applications from state funded Schools and Further Education establishments, Local Authorities, or targeted Community Groups in support of local strategies.
- 3.2 As a minimum, applicant organisations will need to have the following:

<b>MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>CRICKET CLUBS</b>	<b>STATE FUNDED SCHOOLS OR FE ESTABLISHMENTS</b>	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITIES</b>	<b>TARGETTED COMMUNITY GROUPS</b>
Current PitchPower Pro Report with a PQS rating of 'unsuitable' or 'basic'.	✓	✓	✓	✓
A Constitution, Articles of Association or the equivalent governing document	✓	✓	✓	✓
Valid Buildings, Contents and Public Liability Insurance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Security of Tenure – Freehold, Leasehold or Rental (min 12 months)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bank account in the Organisation's name	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial accounts for last budget year	✓	✓	x	✓
Club Safeguarding Officer (fully compliant on ECB Safe Hands Management System	✓	x	x	x
Adoption of ECB Safe Hands Policy or equivalent safeguarding policy	✓	✓	✓	✓

Adoption of the ECB Anti-Discrimination Code of Conduct or equivalent EDI policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
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3.3 The ECB will determine whether the granting of funding to an applicant would constitute an unlawful subsidy under subsidy control legislation and may require further information to be provided by an applicant to make that determination. Funding will only be provided if it is determined that the funding would not constitute an unlawful subsidy.

#### 4. **Amount of Grant**

4.1 The amount of grant will be determined by the ECB on a case-by-case basis.

4.2 The grant **cannot** be used to retrospectively fund projects (see Section 8.8).

#### 5. **Partnership Funding**

5.1 There is no minimum level of partnership funding required.

5.2 Partnership funding may be provided by way of an EWCT Interest Free Loan or other funding source, if required.

#### 6. **Key Dates**

6.1 The scheme will be open to applications from 23 July 2024.

6.2 All projects must be completed, and the grant claimed within 12 months of the date of the Offer Letter, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the ECB.

#### 7. **Planning Your Project**

7.1 Careful thought should be given to the planning and timing of the project before starting the application process. Consideration should be given to when projects can be scheduled, in particular, fine turf projects outside the playing season may be affected by adverse weather conditions during late autumn to early spring.



7.2 Whilst some projects can be completed quickly, others can take many months to plan and deliver. The ECB may defer a project until the next budget year if it decides that it is not the right time for the project to be delivered, or if the current annual budget has been fully allocated.

7.3 For projects with a total project cost of up to and including £24,999, applicants are required to submit official 'like-for-like' quotations (or tenders) from two different suppliers. For projects with a total project cost of £25,000 and above, three quotes (or tenders) will be required from different suppliers.

7.4 All official quotations (or tenders) must be legible and contain the following information:

- Supplier's details.
- Date of quote (no more than 6 months old).
- Details of the project or items to be purchased.
- Total Project Cost including VAT, delivery fees and any discounts.

7.5 The amount of grant offered will be based on the quotation(s) from the nominated preferred supplier(s). This information will be written into the Grant Offer Letter. If the applicant organisation subsequently changes the preferred quotation(s) without notifying the ECB, they may need to re-apply and the grant offer may be reduced or withdrawn in its entirety (see Section 9.4).

7.6 For larger projects, i.e. those requiring significant works to the square, outfield or irrigation that are not covered by the standard recommendations provided by the CPA PitchPower report, a Feasibility Study by a qualified Sports Pitch Consultant\* may be required. Applicant organisations will be advised of this requirement at the EOI stage.

*\*As defined in the Sport England Design Guidance Note for Natural Turf (see Section 12).*

7.7 Large scale groundworks are also likely to require planning permission. In such cases, applicant organisations must contact the local planning authority to obtain written confirmation of whether planning permission will be required or not. The planning process can take on average 12 weeks for a decision.

## **8. The Application Process**

8.1 Access to the application will be via the online Investment Management System (IMS) at <https://ims.ecb.co.uk>

8.2 The applicant organisation will need to identify two contacts (authorised signatories) to act on its behalf for the project:

- The key contact will be responsible for completing the application process, and to sign and accept the terms and conditions of the Grant Offer Letter (contract).
- The second contact will be responsible for countersigning and accepting the terms and conditions of the Grant Offer Letter.
- Contacts will need to have reasonable IT skills, have access to a personal email address and set up a personal user account on IMS.
- Contacts should not share the same home address, email or phone number.

8.3 New user account details will need to be verified before the designated key contact will be able to start the application process.

8.4 The key contact will be required to complete a brief Expression of Interest (EOI) form, which requests basic information about the proposed project. This can then be submitted to the ECB, together with the PitchPower Pro report, for initial review. If the EOI receives 'in principle' support from the ECB, access to the full application will be granted.

8.5 If an EOI is unsuccessful, the organisation may be directed to the EWCT Interest Free Loan Scheme.

8.6 On completion of the full application, it should be submitted to the ECB for approval.

8.7 The ECB may refer the application back to the organisation for further evidence, if required.

**8.8 Organisations must not proceed with their project until they have received, signed, and returned the Grant Offer Letter to ECB. If an organisation is**

**subsequently found to have commenced the project before receiving the Grant Offer Letter, the funding will be withdrawn (see Section 4.2).**

**9. If the Application is Successful**

- 9.1 Once the ECB is satisfied with the application, the Grant Offer Letter will be issued by email, usually within 30 days of receipt of the completed application.
- 9.2 To accept the terms and conditions of the grant offer, both contacts (authorised signatories) will be required to electronically sign and return the Grant Offer Letter using the DocuSign process) within 30 days of receipt.
- 9.3 Once the ECB is in receipt of the signed Grant Offer Letter, the organisation may commence the project.
- 9.4 Any changes to the project specification or supplier(s) after the Grant Offer Letter has been issued must be notified to the ECB immediately as this may affect the amount of grant. Failure to notify the ECB may result in the revised project being ineligible and the grant being reduced or withdrawn in its entirety.
- 9.5 All projects must be completed, and the grant claimed within 12 months of the date of the Offer Letter, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the ECB.
- 9.6 The organisation may submit multiple interim claims, throughout the duration of the scheduled works programme, and / or a Final Claim on completion of the Project. Each claim must be supported by invoices at least equal to the value of the claim submitted, up to the value of the Final Project Cost.
- 9.7 In exceptional circumstances, the ECB will accept a pro-forma invoice(s) ahead of completion. Any organisation that submits a pro-forma invoice with a claim will be required to complete a reconciliation on completion of the project, where they will need to upload any outstanding VAT invoices.
- 9.8 Payment(s) will be by BACS transfer direct to the organisation's designated bank account, usually within 10 days working days of receipt of each claim.
- 9.9 The organisation shall immediately on receipt of the funds pay those sums received by it from the ECB to the relevant contractor(s) / supplier(s).
- 9.10 The organisation will provide an initial Post Project Review on the impact of the project, after completion. This will include, without limitation, a PitchPower PQS rating, outcomes, photos, publicity, etc., and any other information reasonably requested by ECB.
- 9.11 Organisations will provide further annual reviews (for up to 3 years) on the impact of the grant depending on the project type, e.g. to self-monitor the squares and outfield quality using PitchPower, any increase in the number of players or matches played.

## 10. **ECB Contacts**

Should you have any queries relating to the Grass Pitch Improvement Fund (GPIF), please contact the ECB Facilities Planning Manager (FPM) for your region or email: [grantmanagement@ecb.co.uk](mailto:grantmanagement@ecb.co.uk)

<b>ECB Facilities Planning Managers (FPM)</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Neil Higginson	SW & Wales	Berkshire Buckinghamshire Cornwall Devon Dorset Gloucestershire Hampshire Isle of Wight Oxfordshire Somerset Wales Wiltshire	<a href="mailto:neil.higginson@ecb.co.uk">neil.higginson@ecb.co.uk</a> 07919 628985
Ian Moore	London & East	Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire Essex Hertfordshire Huntingdonshire Kent Middlesex Norfolk Suffolk Surrey Sussex	<a href="mailto:ianj.moore@ecb.co.uk">ianj.moore@ecb.co.uk</a> 07584 217346
Richard Dixon	North	Cheshire Cumbria Durham Lancashire Northumberland Yorkshire	<a href="mailto:richard.dixon@ecb.co.uk">richard.dixon@ecb.co.uk</a> 07795 128100
Ged McDougall	Midlands	Derbyshire Herefordshire Leicestershire Lincolnshire Northamptonshire Nottinghamshire Shropshire Staffordshire Warwickshire Worcestershire	<a href="mailto:ged.mcdougall@ecb.co.uk">ged.mcdougall@ecb.co.uk</a> 07788 386358

## **11. Useful Information**

### **About PitchPower**

PitchPower is an app developed by the Football Foundation (FF) for assessing the performance of natural turf football, rugby and cricket playing facilities.

In Cricket, PitchPower Pro is used by the County Pitch Advisors (CPAs) across England and Wales to make expert assessments of grass squares and outfield. During a PitchPower Pro site visit, your CPA will carry out a series of measurements on your site to get data that is entered into PitchPower to produce your PitchPower Pro report. This will include an assessment of playing quality (to four different levels) and recommendations on how you can work to improve your square and outfield.

For visits related to the GPIF, your CPA will make recommendations on suitable packages of work to help you with your application.

In 2025, the ECB and the FF will be launching a version of PitchPower for Grounds Managers that will offer some of the features available to CPAs in PitchPower Pro.

### **Useful Links**

- **Planning Your Project**

- How to Develop Your Project
- Making a Planning Application for your Sports Project

<https://www.ecb.co.uk/play/club-support/facility-management>

- **Sport England Planning Guidance**

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/sports-club-planning-application-guide>

- **Sport England Design Guidance Note for Natural Turf**

<https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/outdoor-surfaces>

- **EWCT Interest Free Loan Scheme**

<https://www.ecb.co.uk/play/club-support/club-funding/interest-free-loan-scheme>

- **The Essential Guide to Cricket Grounds Maintenance**

<https://resources.thegma.org.uk/cricket/cricket-home>

## 12. **Process Flow Chart**

