

# THE FA PITCH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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# **The FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

The need for this service is more relevant now than ever, given the current economic times and the pressures facing grassroots football.

The recent grassroots survey has again highlighted that football pitch quality is affecting participation and in anticipation of this and the current economic climate affecting local authority pitch maintenance the FA Facilities & Investment Team has been working in partnership with the industry to develop a Grass Pitch Maintenance service that can be utilised by grassroots football clubs with the simple aim of improving the quality of grass pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide football clubs with advice/practical solutions on a number of areas and discounts on machinery and materials to support, improving the club's playing surface.





### ***What is the difference between The FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) and the IOG Grounds & Natural Turf Improvement Programme (G&NTIP)***

The PIP is FA led with a specific focus on improving the quality of in excess of 2000 natural turf pitches over the lifecycle of the new National Game Strategy (NGS). The programme is supported by the IOG via the Regional Pitch Advisors (RPAs).

The G&NTIP is led by The FA, ECB, RFL and Sport England with a focus on improving ALL natural turf pitches in partnership with the IOG. The FA supports this programme and its aims by part funding the eight RPA roles as well as the National Manager.. The FA has agreed an allocation of RPA days with the IOG and these days are used to support the roll out and development of The FA PIP.

### ***Why are there two programmes?***

To ensure The FA can be clear in setting measures and targets bespoke to the game. In addition by having an independent programme, albeit supported by the IOG RPAs, it allows The FA to secure commercial partners that meet the company's vision and aspiration over the next 4-years. Having this independence also allows for any income generated by the appointment of partners to be kept within the programme and allows the IOG to also remain independent and support the industry.

### ***Who is responsible for the roll out of the FA PIP?***

The FA, in partnership with the County FA (CFA) network is responsible for promoting, coordinating and delivering the programme across the country with support from the IOG RPSs. The Regional Facilities & Investment Managers (RFIM) will act as the programme lead with support from the respective CFA member of staff. All IOG RPA or associate grounds man visits must be coordinated through the CFA.

### ***Is it only the IOG RPA who can conduct PIP visits?***

No. Each of the RPA's has been tasked with developing a network of pro-club or other industry professionals to ensure the demand is met. All templates have been standardised to ensure clarity in reporting key measures, recommendations and timelines for re-visit. It is envisaged that the appointed IOG RPA will oversee/check all reports to ensure consistency across the country.

### ***Can a set cost for a visit be agreed and rolled out across the country to ensure clarity and prevent boarder issues?***

Yes. It has been agreed with industry professionals that the cost will be **£100.00 per visit**.

The sum of £100.00 should be paid to the CFA by the club/organisation upon agreeing the date for a visit with the fee reinvested in to the CFA's PIP budget to help support the groundsman and volunteer workshops/seminars.

## ***What should club/organisation receiving a PIP visit expect for their money?***

The following is expected;

- Visit undertaken by IOG RPA or other suitably qualified and agreed person – average visiting time is 90-minutes, although this will vary depending on the site.
- A Performance Quality Standard (PQS) test is conducted across the site, the results of which will be clearly detailed in the report.
- A Soil Analysis Test (SAT) if required and recommended, the results of which will be clearly detailed in the report
- A detailed report outlining key issues and practical solutions
- A suggested 12-month maintenance plan reflecting key issues and recommendations relating to machinery and product needs, as well as other useful operational and management information.
- Access to FA Official Suppliers schedule of rates, expertise and networks
- A revisit date agreed

## ***Who is responsible for coordinating the FA PIP Seminars?***

The respective CFA, in partnership with the IOG RPA. It has been agreed that two seminars will be held by each CFA per annum, namely;

- End of season renovation workshop – to be held in April/May
- Winter workshop – to be held in November/December

The dates of these events need to be confirmed with the RFIM to ensure the national diary of events is maintained, thereby allowing key commercial partners to resource accordingly.

These two seminars should feature on the CFA website and be advertised to leagues and clubs as CPD opportunities.

## ***Who pays for the costs associated with these seminars?***

All CFA's were asked to allocate a budget to the PIP in the latest round of County Planning, therefore it is expected that the CFA secures and pays for the venue and associated refreshments. It is hoped that where possible previously funded facilities are used to keep costs to a minimum.

## ***Who delivers these two seminars?***

The IOG RPA will be the primary deliverer of these sessions, supported by the extended network of groundsmen (Pro or other suitably qualified individual) as well as representatives from The FA commercial partners.

## ***Are there any other resources available to CFA's, leagues and clubs?***

Yes. The FA has been working in partnership with the IOG and SE to develop a website dedicated to natural turf groundsmanship. The website can be accessed via the following link [www.groundsmanship.co.uk](http://www.groundsmanship.co.uk) and will provide CFA's clubs and leagues access to a library of information, including;

- Material
- Tasks & Equipment
- Seasonal Management
- Health & Safety
- Football News
- Alan Ferguson's Diary – A series of notes around key tasks to follow monthly (Alan Ferguson is The FA's Head of Grounds & Estates, including St. Georges Park and Wembley Stadium.)

***There has been mention of two commercial partners supporting the programme, who are these companies, what do they mean for the programme and how will CFA's, clubs and leagues benefit?***

The PIP is a key focus for The FA over the next 4-years, as such it was deemed appropriate to secure two commercial partners to support the roll-out and growth in line with the companies aspirations. The two partners are;

- Redexim Charterhouse Limited – Official Machinery Supplier to The FA Pitch Improvement Programme
- Rigby Taylor Limited – Official Consumables Supplier to The FA Pitch Improvement Programme

Both companies were subject to The FA's tender process and have subsequently signed 4-years contracts to support the programme.

Both companies have agreed a partnering schedule of rates with The FA to support the programme, details of which will be sent to CFA's under a separate cover. Please note it has been agreed that these rates will be made available to ALL CFA's, FA affiliated clubs and leagues (not Premier League or Football League), and not solely to those clubs/organisations receiving a PIP visit and report. These schedules will be reviewed annually and disseminated to CFA's.

Both companies have agreed to support the two seminars (as detailed above) delivered by CFA's on an annual basis with both personnel and associated product and service.

As well as having access to a comprehensive schedule of rates to support clubs, CFA's and leagues will have direct access to a network of local dealerships, contractors and company representatives to support the programmes roll out over the next 4-years.

You will find company overviews and associated information pertaining to both commercial partners in the appendix to this document.



***Can other external companies support these seminars?***

No. The FA has signed a 4-year deal with both partners and an agreement reached ensuring representatives of both will attend and deliver at FA PIP seminars. Both organisations have extensive experience within the industry. Conversations regarding any existing agreements, conflicts of interest should be discussed with the RFIM. This policy only applies to FA PIP seminars.

***A lot of the PIP reports are recommending the purchase of machinery and other equipment; is there any finance available to support these recommendations?***

Yes. All potential applications will be subject to the usual FA & Football Foundation (FF) grant support processes and must be supported by a FA PIP report with clearly defined recommendations. In addition, NLS clubs can access financial support via the Football Stadia Improvement Fund (FSIF).

All potential applications to either the FF or FSIF must be asked to fill in a FA Football Enquiry Form (FEF) to allow The FA to track demand. This MUST be the first official contact point in the process.



***A lot of CFA's and clubs have existing working relationships with local contractors for the larger maintenance procedures. How is this being factored in to the FA PIP to ensure continuity and best value?***

As The FA PIP develops it is envisaged that a list of competent contractors will be developed in partnership with our colleagues at the IOG, CFA's and leagues – this list will solely be for the larger maintenance practices (winter and end of season). Please note that if a CFA or league has a formal working relationship with a local contractor, the contractor would also be eligible to access the discount agreed with The FA commercial partners. It is envisaged that over time a number of 'FA Equipment Banks' will be established to provide clubs and leagues access to discounted maintenance services.

***Reference has been made to FA Equipment Banks being established, what's the latest with this and what funding is available to support their roll-out?***

FA Equipment Banks will be considered in the right locations subject to all local partners working together to provide the required assurances and framework for operating the service. Some initial pilots have been supported in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, North Riding, Northamptonshire and Northumberland. We will be analysing the success and issues relating to these pilots before promoting and endorsing a particular model. It is also envisaged that significant equipment banks will reside at the proposed football hubs, however, it is suggested that any applicant discusses any proposals with the respective CFA and RFIM. An application for financial support would be made through the standard channels.

***Is there going to be a dedicated and simpler application process for supporting the PIP at the FF?***

Discussions relating to a new deal with the FF are ongoing, but it is hoped that partners can agree to a simpler and more efficient application process for clubs.

***Is there going to be a ring-fenced pot of money at the FF to support clubs delivering the aims of the PIP?***

As referenced above, discussions regarding a new deal with the FF are ongoing. The FA will be setting the parameters for how the FA money invested in to the FF is spent and the PIP programme will feature as part of these discussions.

***Given The FA have secured partners to support the PIP do clubs still need to get three quotes?***

Yes and No!

For the remaining year (to June 2016) of the Football Foundation deal three quotes will have to be sourced when requesting a grant for any machinery or consumables to support the programme. Under the terms agreed with the 'Official Partners' from years 2-4 they will be the sole suppliers of quotations to support grant applications. Discussions are ongoing with the Football Foundation to ensure this process is adopted in line with FA requirements.

# FA PITCH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – PROCESS DIAGRAM

## STEP 1

- Club submits FA Expression of Interest Form (EOI) detailing their aspirations linked to The FA PIP

## STEP 2

- EOI reviewed by CFA with a visit organised and coordinated with the club and IOG RPA
- All visits should be coordinated through the IOG RPA, should the RPA not have capacity to undertake the visit a member of the agreed extended network may be appointed

## STEP 3

- A site visit is carried out with respective CFA presence if possible

## STEP 4

- A report is produced by the RPA with a copy sent to the club, CFA and The FA RFIM
- Feedback sought from club following an agreed timescale

## STEP 5

- Club reviews and discusses recommendations with CFA and FA RFIM
- Should the recommendations include improvement to onsite machinery or access to natural turf consumable products then The FA commercial partners should be engaged
- Should the recommendations include training and support for the onsite groundsman then access to appropriate training opportunities should be clearly detailed in the report

## STEP 6

- A revisit date is agreed with the RPA, CFA and club

## STEP 7

- Revisit report reviewed and if tangible improvement is evident then pitch can be classed as 'improved' and is eligible to be allocated against CFA NGS target