

PITCH ADVISORY SERVICE

END OF YEAR REPORT

2021/2022



**GROUNDS
MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Pitch Advisory Service (PAS)** transitioned from the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme (GaNTIP) on 1 April 2022, for a third phase of the programme and runs until 31 March 2024, continuing the work that had been started during GaNTIP.

The PAS has increased in size going from 2 Key Account Managers (KAMs) and 8 Regional Pitch Advisors (RPAs) to 4 KAMs and 11 RPAs and is comprised of four sports: Cricket, Football, Rugby Football League, and Rugby Football Union.

The first year of the multisport element of the programme has centred around planning with a focus on milestones and benchmarking. The football team have continued to build on the success of PitchPower and the Grass pitch maintenance fund. Please see Appendix 1 for PAS Organisation Chart.

The significant achievements this year have been around the continued development and implementation of the Football Foundation PitchPower app with integration of the technology and data collection from Cricket, Rugby Football League, and Rugby Football Union, that will allow PAS to continue to provide a consistent approach tailored to their needs, gain better data, and provides NGBs with greater scope of assistance at grassroots and recreational level.

Grounds Survey

Collaborating with the GMA, the Pitch Advisory Service (in conjunction with Myriad and Doran Consultancy) carried out an annual grounds survey that we intend to replicate each year.

Workforce Development

PAS has instructed a project to be carried out to develop a workforce development plan aligned to the PAS, GMA and NGBs overarching strategies and plans which will meet the needs of the game and support the aim to help tackle inequalities within the grounds industry. This project started on 1 March 2022 and is due to be completed on 1 August 2022. This project works closely with the Football Foundation Groundskeeper Volunteer Plan group and all relevant GMA, SE, ECB, RFL and RFU workforce development strategies.

Local Authority

Local Authority interaction remains an essential focus area for the PAS programme. The FF has recruited two new members of staff to work specifically with Local Authorities.

The pilot they are currently running will help identify any future resource needed: these additional resources will play a key part in future phases of the programme.

During the past 12 months the PAS has focused on the following:

- Further development of the GMA Toolkit sport specific pages and content
- Development of PitchPower 2.0 for multisport
- Manual site visit data collection in readiness for PP 2.0
- Webinars to introduce the new PAS team
- Support Network development
- Engagement and development of grounds volunteers
- Initial scoping and engagement with Local authorities
- Launch of additional sport specific online courses

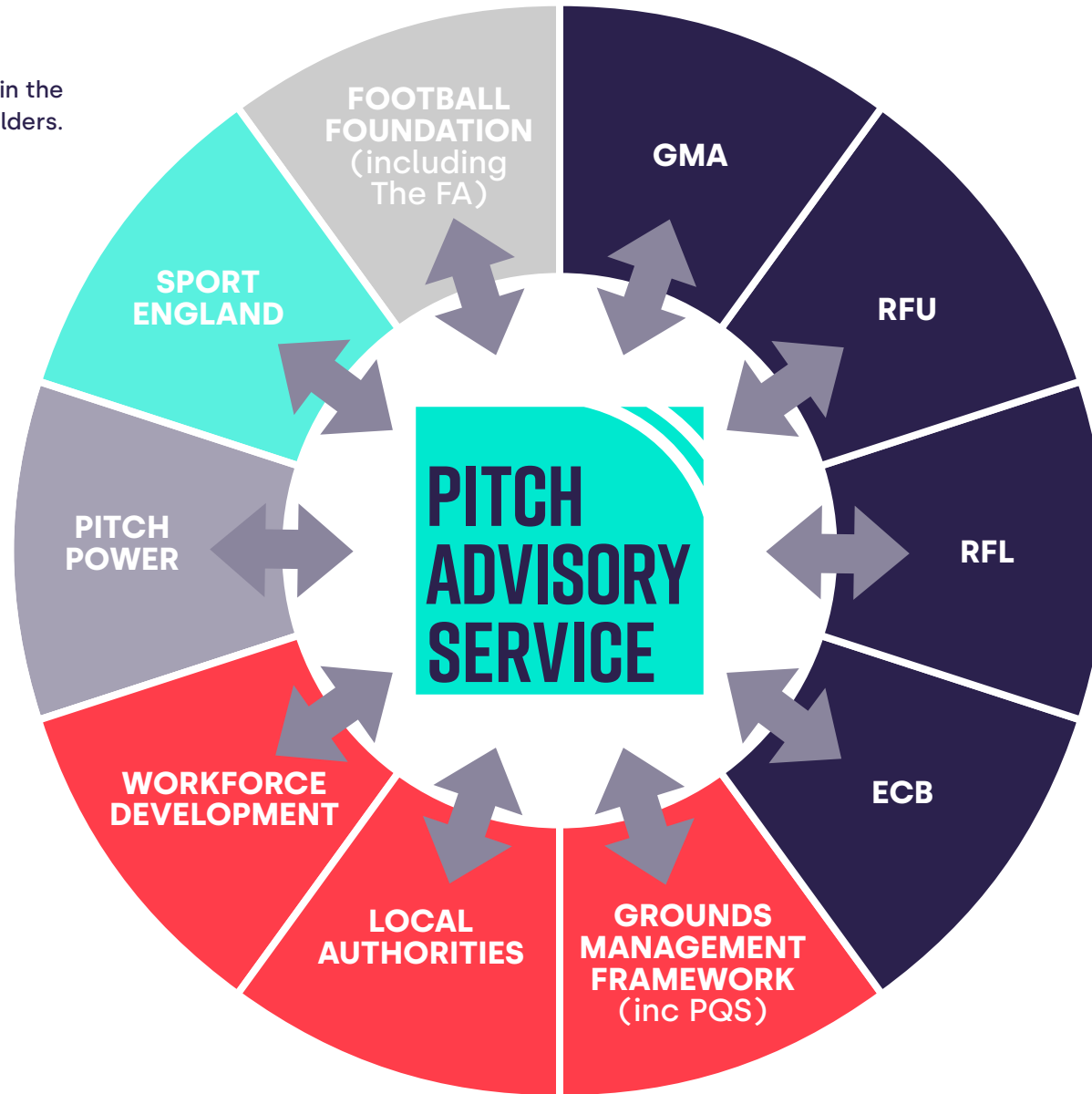
PitchPower

Whilst there has been good progress made with the development of the Multisport version of PitchPower, the launch date has been delayed due to system integration challenges and will now launch in Summer 2022.



COLLABORATION

Key areas of collaboration within the PAS, their partners and stakeholders.



S.O.A.R ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Technical expertise, information advice, guidance, and support
- PitchPower Development
- Digital offerings such as the GMA Toolkit, RGC website, FF online Groundskeeping Community, OurLearning and webinars
- Sustainable approach to recommendations
- Regional Pitch Advisors and flexibility
- Multi NGB programme
- RPA Network reacting to emergency situations quickly and effectively
- Technical Support to the ECB, FF, FA, RFL, RFU and Sport England
- Support and contribution to NGB facility and strategy management
- Affordable and accessible online training courses, focusing on volunteer introduction and fundamentals
- Engagement and development programme for all support networks

OPPORTUNITIES

- PitchPower – Multisport
- Wider commitment and resource support from NGBs
 - Communications
 - Membership
 - Training
 - Workforce Development
- Short practical training courses focusing on fundamentals and volunteer health and safety
- Launch of Grounds Management Framework
- Volunteer webinars
- Environmentally sustainable approach
 - Explore innovative approaches and products
- Data collection
- Engage and mentor all support networks
- Increase participation and capacity
- NGB specific membership

ASPIRATIONS

- Committed long term support from the NGBs
- PitchPower app 2.0
- Comprehensive (automated) data collection approach for all partners (PowerBi)
- Full status/benchmark of current Ground/pitch stock
- Full status of volunteer network and skill level
- Upskilling of the volunteer network
- Environmentally Sustainable approach
- Ongoing support to the volunteer community with RPA support, GMA Toolkit, FF Online Groundskeeping Community, and new GMA website
- Free to end user training
- Launch of Grounds Management Framework
- Multi-sport evidence-based research
- Multi-sport and diverse volunteer community
- Provide innovative solutions and products

RESULTS

- PitchPower for football
- Increased ground/pitch assessments
- Increased ground/pitch improvements
- Increased volunteer engagement
- Increased training – both formal and informal
- Increased volunteer interaction with the GMA Toolkit
- Continued funding successes
- Success of the FF online Groundskeeping Community
- Delivery of sport KPIs and meet deadlines
- Emergency responses
 - Floods
 - LA Risk Register
 - COVID response collaboration

LOCAL AUTHORITY RISK REGISTER – MARCH 2022

Research was carried out to ascertain the impact that COVID-19 had on Local Authorities and their ability and availability to maintain the sports grounds under their management.

Average response rate for March 2022: 26%

Highest region response rate:

West Midlands at 35%

The response rates have decreased since the first LARR questionnaire was conducted, peaking at 81% in August 2020. This could be attributed to a number of reasons:

Survey fatigue: The grounds industry as a whole has been sent a number of questionnaires over the past few years, which has resulted in lower-than-expected number for completion; we feel that the Grounds Survey was also affected by this phenomenon.

Redirection of and/or reduction of staffing:

During the process of requesting information for the LARR, we received a large number of redirections and being told that the contact no longer works for the LA.

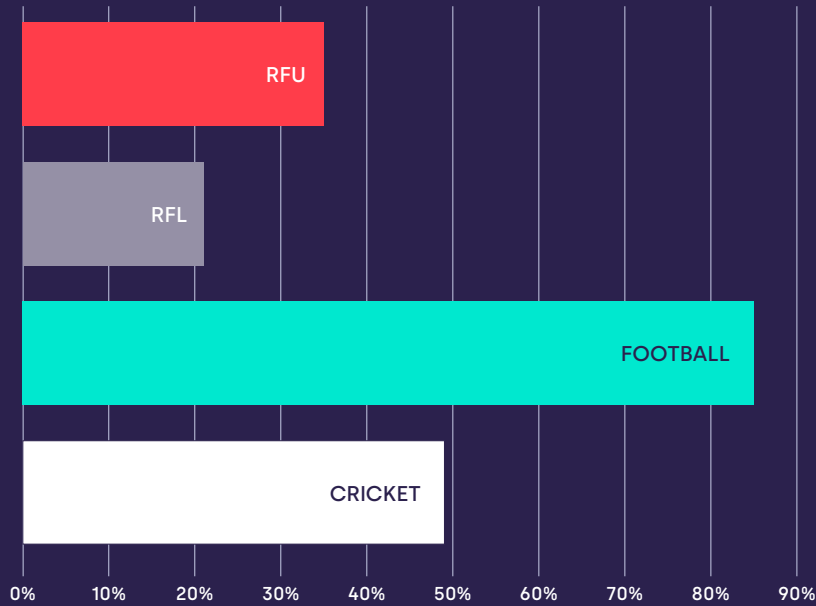
The LA Pilot currently being run by the FF will help identify the nature of any future resources needed.

Response rate comparisons



These graphs show a summary of the results attained from the LARR Survey.

% of grounds that were 100% ready



GMA Local Authority Facility Survey by number of responses*

(*response excluded: Unable to contact)



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

PAS Grounds Survey

In 2019, the Grounds Management Association conducted an industry-wide research project which resulted in the report, Sports Vital Profession. An essential part of the research was a survey of professional and volunteer grounds managers which provided an important baseline to measure the effectiveness of existing and future measures. It was agreed by the GMA, Sport England, Football Foundation and the National Governing Bodies of sport that annual 'temperature checks' should be taken post-Covid and beyond, to build on the work of the industry research and to provide data and feedback for the continuing development of the Pitch Advisory Service.

The purpose of the survey was

- To provide an update/estimate of the number of people working in the industry both professionally and volunteers in England and in which sector of the industry
- To identify how the pandemic has affected the industry/workforce
 - Separate the professional and volunteer levels
- Has the pandemic affected the economic value of the industry?
- To identify trends, attitudes and pressures within individual sectors of the grounds management industry.

The GMA 2022 Annual Survey email invitations began circulation on 7 February 2022 and the survey closed on 11 March 2022. The survey request was sent to GMA members, previous survey respondents who agreed to be contacted again and through the National Governing Bodies of sport.

- 293 responses were submitted by professional grounds managers.
- 445 responses were submitted by volunteer grounds managers.
- 46 professionals provided additional comments and
- 142 volunteers provided additional comments.

Priority areas to address

1. Recruitment crisis
2. Salaries
3. Work/Life balance
4. Budgets

Continuing areas of work

1. Diversity
2. Lack of equipment
3. Awareness of GMF

Use strengths to advantage

1. Appeals to older people
2. Passion for the job



RECRUITMENT



BUDGETS



WORK/LIFE



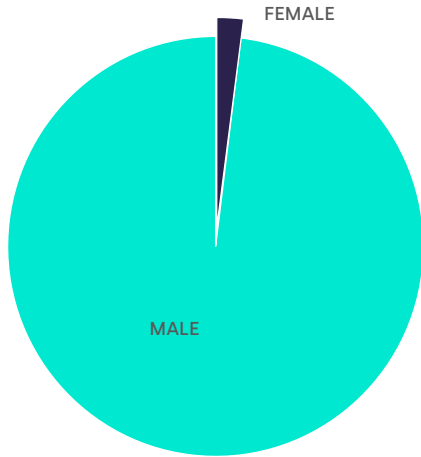
SALARIES

**GROUNDS SURVEY
DEMOGRAPHICS DASHBOARDS**

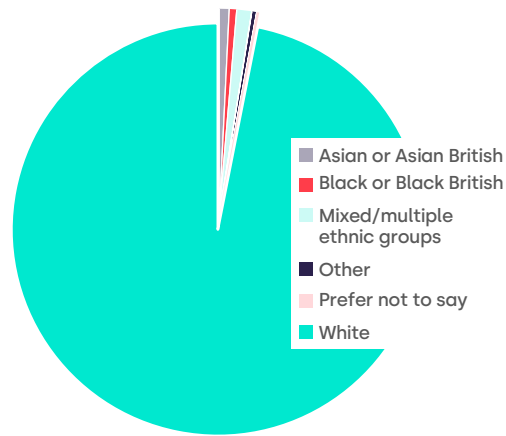
Volunteer Grounds Managers

VOLUNTEERS – DEMOGRAPHICS DASHBOARD

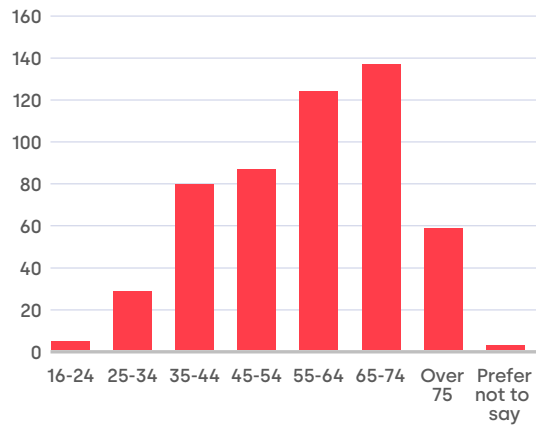
Gender



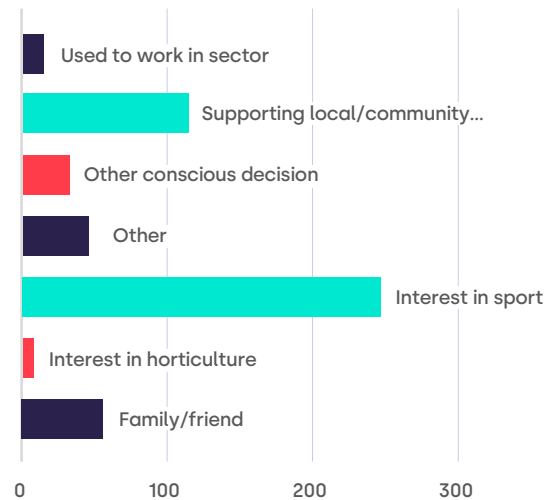
Ethnicity



Age



How volunteers became involved



98% of volunteers are male

only **2%** of volunteers are female

3% of volunteers are non-white

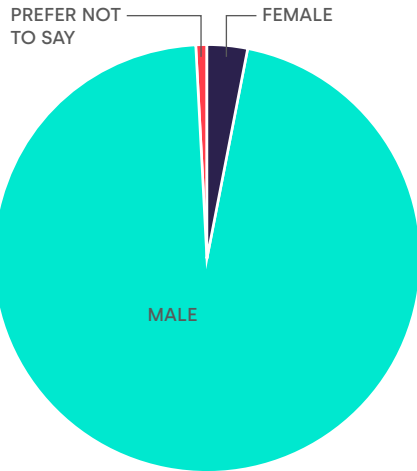
over **60%** of volunteers are over 55 years old

only **1%** of volunteers are 16 to 23 years old

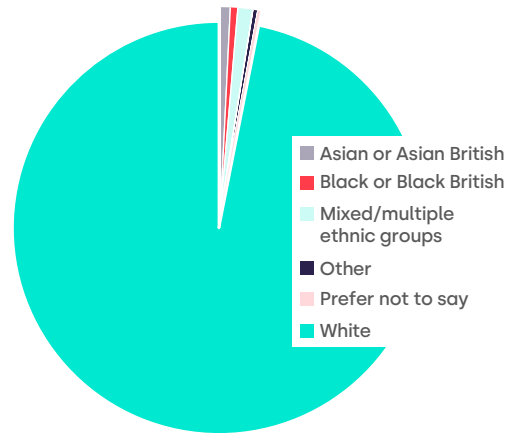
2/3 of volunteers give more than 5 hours per week

PROFESSIONALS – DEMOGRAPHICS DASHBOARD

Gender



Ethnicity

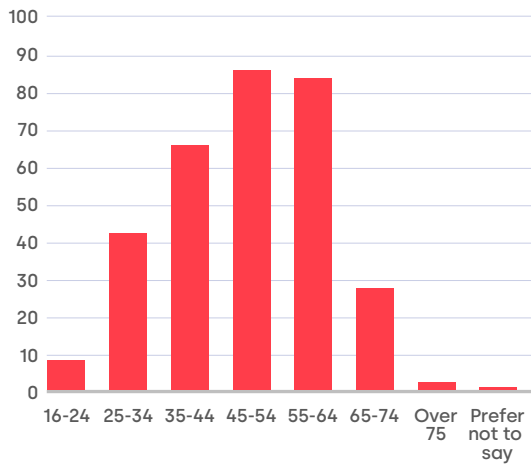


96% of professionals are male

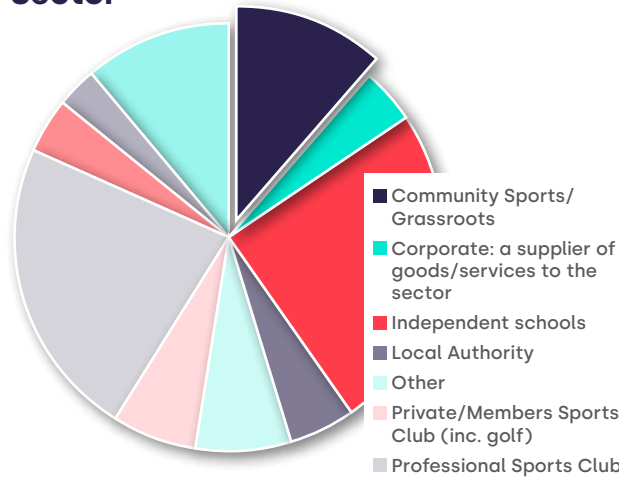
3% of professionals are female

3% of professionals are non-white

Age



Sector



36% of professionals are over 55 years old

only **3%** of professionals are 16 to 24 years old

25% of respondents are from independent schools and 23% from professional sports clubs

ECB SUMMARY

The past year has seen a change with the start of the Pitch Advisory Service (PAS), for the first-time two cricket-only Regional Pitch Advisors (RPAs) covering the North/Midlands, and the South, fully committed to supporting cricket grounds management across the recreational game, resulting in a positive pro-active year.

Challenges

- The effects of Covid were still being seen at the start of this year.
- Handover from GaNTIP.

Year 1 Key Points

- The partnership with ECB is working well, with solid foundations to the start of a sustainable support programme for recreational cricket.
- With the start of PAS, the planning stage was vital and took up the first half of the year. Weekly planning meetings took place. Documents, planners, and time scales were produced, ensuring that the delivery stage was structured, this roll-out started from October.
- The GMA and ECB have worked well in partnership to support the technical development of the PitchPower Multisport App. This support has included technical expertise and a significant time investment that will eventually enable better advice to a wider audience of grounds managers in cricket.

- The team has been working hard on improving guidance for grounds managers, improving, and adding content to the GMA toolkit and developing a new Health and Safety section.
- Re-engaging with the County Pitch Advisor (CPA) network, holding three meetings/seminars and started a new CPA recruitment programme, providing an increased network of 47%.
- The role of the CPA is vital in delivering support to ground staff across the recreational game, carrying out assessments and towards the end of year two delivering two hour face-to-face basic practical workshops, keeping the programme of development for the CPAs will be the core of support to the game and we are committed to the programme and further events are planned in for the remaining years of this phase.
- Cricket's RPAs have settled into their roles and have developed good relationships with the County Cricket Boards (CCBs) and the ECB Regional Facilities Planning Managers (RFPMs), these solid foundations can now be developed in year 2.
- RPAs have carried out a significant number of site visits to support ECB Network and have supported CPAs to do even more. With 82 reports completed and further 127 completed by CPAs through the CCBs, giving for the first-time some data collation, this will be continued until PitchPower is launched.

CPA Engagement

- Three CPA seminars were delivered, the first at Edgbaston (November 2021), followed by two regional seminars (Bradford and Reading) in March 2022.
- The CPA network were given updates, outlining PAS, GMA, and ECB commitment to the network, included in this was an active workshop on how the network can develop, the interaction continued in the follow up seminars, the CPAs had an introduction to the PitchPower app.
- The seminars were received in a positive way, with an excellent approach to communication and discussion forming some solid foundations to build the network into a sustainable support group.
- A support and mentoring programme introduced in the second half of the year, delivered regionally by the RPAs, continued the positive foundations established through the seminars.

New CPA Training

- The ECB/PAS has trained up 25 new CPAs (growing the network by 47%).
- CPAs completed the GMA's level 2 and 3 online training courses.
- Two comprehensive face-to-face GMA/ECB training courses were held in Bradford and Uxbridge, this was followed by a mentoring

programme set up by RPAs. Some areas included in the course were.

- PAS and CPA role, Challenges
- What makes a good pitch and outfield?
- Identifying and solving pitch and outfield problems
- Report writing (Tricks of the trade, dos, and don'ts), Grounds Management Framework, PitchPower, Pitch Performance criteria, Analysing Results / data
- Group discussion

Two-hour Practical workshops (Includes)

- Early Spring Maintenance (Pre-season)
- Match Pitch preparation including Marking out (season)
- Match Pitch repairs including foot hole repair (season)
- Post season renovation. Winter maintenance (end of season)
- Safe working practice Machinery maintenance and operation (all year)
- Training and building a knowledge base for recreational ground staff are the core elements in producing good quality pitches at all levels, the new GMA online training course provide the vital knowledge that is required, the practical operations will be delivered via two-hour Practical workshops.

- The RPAs have started to deliver pilots for the practical workshops in the last quarter of this year, these pilots will be continue throughout the 2022 playing season, this will be reviewed and is planned to be rolled out later in year two, prior to the 2023 season, the initial feed back from CCBs and delegates has been positive.
- The CPAs will be trained up to deliver the sessions arranged through the CCBs.

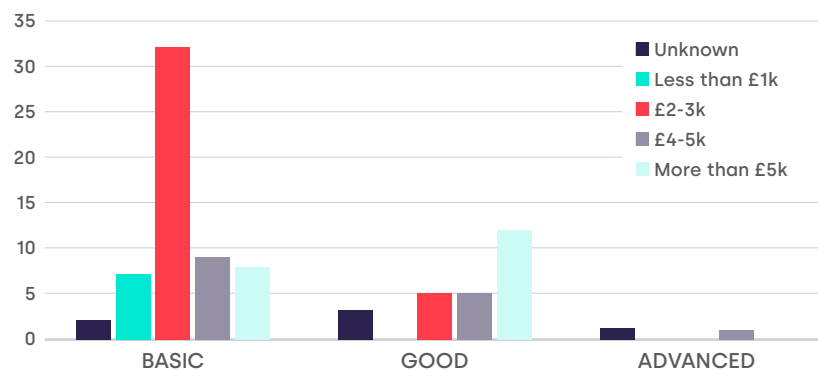
In conclusion the first year of the cricket aspect of PAS has been a positive one with some solid foundations put in place, the PAS/ECB team have worked very hard in building relationships, improving guidance and knowledge, we can now build on these results in year two and increase the support to all local ground staff.

Key Statistics

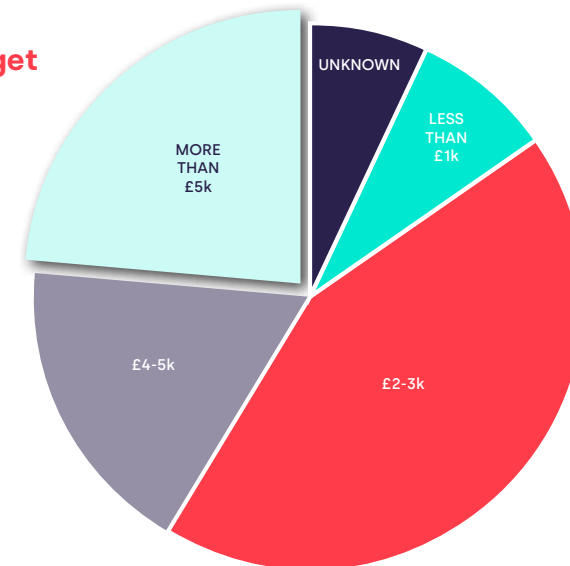
37% of assessments were carried out at the start of the season	209 Site visit/reports carried out, 127 completed by CPAs and 87 by RPAs	L1 Online Training Course: 164 enrolments L2 Online Training Course: 80 enrolments L3 Online Training Course: 46 enrolments
81% of squares assessed were purpose built	All squares assessed were rated Basic or above	77% of outfields did NOT have drainage
86% of squares fell between Basic and Good with 29% being rated as Good and 58% being rated as Basic	61% of assessments were carried out by the CPAs	100% of outfields were compacted
There was an average of 10.6 pitches per site	74% of visits were requested by a CCB	85% of outfields were rated as Basic
81% of squares assessed had irrigation	37% of sites assessed were Local Authority sites	Only 1 of the outfields assessed was rated as unclassified
87% of assessments carried out included the square	71% of CPAs attended all seminars 86% attended the first seminar	70% of sites assessed were multisport

The graphs below show the budgets available and the PQS level, giving an insight into the quality of pitches and squares against budgets available within the recreational game and the quality level of pitches taken from the ground assessments.

General condition of square versus Maintenance/Renovation budget



Maintenance/Renovation budget



Averages - Square assessment		
Grass height (mm)	22mm	Basic
Ground cover (%)	80%	Good
Desirable grasses (%)	55%	Basic
Undesirable grasses (%)	19%	Advanced
Weeds (%)	6%	Basic
Worms (%)	9%	Basic
Evenness (mm)	25mm	Below Basic
Core sample loam (mm)	128mm	Advanced
Surface thatch (mm)	10mm	Below Basic
Vertical root depth (mm)	65mm	Basic
Surface debris (%)	2%	Basic
	Overall	Basic

Averages - Outfield assessment		
Grass height (mm)	28mm	Good
Ground cover (%)	79%	Basic
Desirable grasses (%)	44%	Basic
Undesirable grasses (%)	25%	Advanced
Weeds (%)	10%	Basic
Sample growing medium (mm)	147mm	Below Basic
Surface thatch (mm)	21mm	Below Basic
Vertical root depth (mm)	70mm	Below Basic
Surface debris (%)	10%	Basic
	Overall	Basic

Average number of pitches per site	
Total sites	98
Total pitches	1037
Average pitches per site	10.6

ECB KPIs AND MILESTONES FOR YEAR 1

KPIs		Year 1 Target	Year 1 Results	Year 1 % (if applicable)
1.	Number of LA cricket grounds improved one PQS step (minimum standard Basic)	50	0	0%
2.	Number of face-to-face site assessments undertaken	75	209	279%
3.	Number of pitches assessed via PitchPower (Pro)	1	0	0%
4.	The number of grounds volunteers to have accessed 2-hour practical short courses or online courses	100	290	290%
5.	The number of grounds days delivered	18	0	0%
6.	Number ECB County Pitch Advisor CPD seminars delivered	1	1	100%
7.	CPA CPD programme - meetings to be attended per year	2	2	100%
8.	Number of pitches assessed via PitchPower	Developing	Met	
9.	Coverage of ECB County Pitch Advisor Network	Developing	Met	
10.	% of CCBs trained	Developing	Met	
11.	GMA Toolkit - More views	Developing	Met	
12.	GMA Toolkit - Increase dwell time	Developing	Met	
13.	GMA Toolkit - Decrease bounce rate	Developing	Met	
14.	Short format courses attendees	Developing	Met	
15.	% of LA attendees	Developing	Met	
16.	% not attended a course in the last 5 years	Developing	Met	
17.	Recruitment and training of new CPAs - all CPAs to be trained within 12 months of appointment	Recruitment	Met	
18.	CCB delivery of County Partnership Agreement Standards	Establish	Met	
19.	User feedback relating to the delivery of the scheme Rated as Good	75%	No data	
20.	User feedback relating to the delivery of the scheme Rated as useful/relevant	75%	No data	

Fifteen out of 25 (75%) KPIs were achieved or exceeded. Of the remaining five KPIs, two are PitchPower dependent and impacted by the delay to the launch of PitchPower (awaited). The delivery of 'Grounds Days' is still at the pilot stage in 2022 (RFU to carry out initial pilot) with a view to a wider launch in 2023 with a larger CPA network. User feedback has not been solicited in 2021-22 and will follow in 2023 once PitchPower has been launched.

1. Developing relationships with LAs, 2 pilot scheme are planned (Redbridge and Bradford) for year two. This KPI will be caught up in year 2, to allow grounds time to improve following initial inspection.

3. Under development, launch date delayed until August 2022.

5. The ground days are in the planning stage, with a full rollout in April 2023.

19 & 20. Surveys have been postponed until PitchPower has been used in a full cricket season and a year of delivery has been completed.

FOOTBALL FOUNDATION SUMMARY

The year 2021/22 has been one of transition and continued progress building on from phase 2 of GaNTIP. Restructuring of the existing RPA network into sports specific teams took place at the beginning of PAS phase 3 which resulted in reducing the headcount of football team from 8 RPAs to 6 although this was an overall increase in resource for football, this meant a change in region and CFAs for some RPAs and the recruitment of one new RPA for the South West region.

The Football PAS team have continued with the successful delivery of the PitchPower app, which has seen 2023 individual inspections which equates to circa 5650 pitches. The success and uptake of the programme has led to unprecedented demand leading to over 1000 submissions during March and April.

PitchPower 2.0

The introduction of PitchPower has been a big success and allowed pitches to be assessed at scale for the first time. Since the launch in September 2020, over 8,500 unique pitches have been assessed with high levels (94%) of user satisfaction with the app. Across this sample size, 55% of pitches are rated poor or basic and 45% good or higher. This is higher than the expected national average of 1/3 of pitches being good or higher within Playing Pitch Strategies and this is due to most pitches assessed to date being maintained by the club and voluntary sector where maintenance standards are higher.

The new and improved release of PitchPower will play a significant part in the development of multisport data collection incorporating cricket, rugby football league and rugby football union into a multisport app. The KAMs and NGBs have worked collaboratively along with the app developer to provide detailed requirements for each sport all underpinned by the GMA's GMF. The upgraded version of PitchPower (2.0) for multisport is due to be launched in the summer of 2022.

LA Pilot

A significant area of work for the PAS football team has been the Football Foundations local authority pilots. Instigated in January 2022 all Local Authorities in the country were offered the opportunity to submit an EOI to the Football foundation to be one of 6 local authorities.

Over 80 EOIs were submitted and the following 6 LAs were chosen. These initial pilots will inform a wider programme of support for LAs (to include all sports within PAS), improving the quality of grass pitches across LA stock is imperative if we are to make a real impact in terms of grass pitches and hit our 2024 and 20308 targets of "Good" quality grass pitches. In order to do so it is important that PAS is given the appropriate resource to achieve and service the LA programme.

1. Derby
2. Hartlepool
3. Sheffield
4. Leeds
5. Knowlesy
6. Medway

The chosen LAs then worked with GMA RPAs, FF appointed consultants and local partners to produce a delivery plan (including investment) to improve the quality of grass pitches within their authority area. The PAS team has been heavily involved and huge credit should go to the RPAs who physically attended and assessed up to 700 pitches and fed in key recommendations to the delivery plan.

An additional 81 LAs that were not selected in the initial pilot have been supported via SPAs and RPAs to undertake PP inspections and train LA staff in the use of PitchPower.

Probation Pilot

The PAS football programme has supported the Football Foundation in working with the probation service in partnership with 2 local authorities, to engage those within the probation service to upskill and potentially provide a route into the industry at the same time improving pitches across the 2 Local authorities this includes mentoring from PAS and delegates engaging with GMA learning both online and practical. The 2 local authorities are Derby City Council and Hammersmith Borough Council, the Derby pilot commenced in March 2022 we are waiting on a date for the Hammersmith project.

FOOTBALL FOUNDATION KPIs AND MILESTONES FOR YEAR 1

KPIs	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Results	Year 1 % (if applicable)
The number of 'Good' pitches in England	715	862	121%
Cumulative	4827	4974	103%
Number of pitches assessed via PitchPower	5000	5650	113%
% of assessments completed within 21 days (or sent back to user where inspection data is poor quality)	90	97	108%
The number of volunteers registered for the FF Online Groundskeeping Community	2800	2900	104%
The number of grounds volunteers to have completed formal GMA qualifications (Level 1)	480	709	148%

Comments on KPIs

Across the board the KPI progress is really pleasing and shows the success of the programme and the impact the funding programmes digital solutions such as PitchPower and the Football Foundation Groundskeeping community have had in increasing the scale and reach of the programme however if we are to widen the reach of the programme in the future, the local authority programme is vital.

- Our scalable approach to improving pitches via increased maintenance is working. 65% of pitches that have been involved in the programme for 18 months have progressed to the good standard and we expect this percentage to increase with more time.

- The feedback from clubs is encouraging. 86% of clubs claim their pitches have improved since receiving the funding with 67% of clubs stated that they could visibly see improvements within the first 12 months and a further 18% within 12–18-month timeline. In some cases, the improvements seen by clubs haven't yet been enough to move the pitches on a grade (i.e., from basic to good)
- 54% of the club-maintained pitches (3,422) have been funded and a further 19% have been identified as a priority and deemed likely to submit by the County FA network during financial year 23.

- There are now 4,974 good quality pitches in England – against an annual KPI of 4,827.
- A key pillar of the enhanced activation was the 'Power up your Grass Pitch campaign' launched with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of grass pitch maintenance and driving eligible clubs and organisations to sign up to PitchPower. To do this, the Football Foundation produced content in the form of compelling case studies, publicity assets and expert tips and guidance which was used across Football Foundation, Funding Partner and GMA channels throughout the year of 21. This content was seen over 600,000 times

across Football Foundation social media channels and helped achieve over 50,000 grass pitch page views on the website. Alongside this we also created targeted email campaigns, sending over 13,000 emails promoting the campaign and the benefits of PitchPower to key audiences from our database.

- To supplement the national campaign, under the leadership of the Delivery Team, County FAs have been activating their pipeline of sites locally via several tactics:
 - 46 GMA education workshops delivered.
 - 993 clubs directly contacted by CFAs over email / phone call encouraging them to apply.
 - 444 sites visited by CFAs to support Pitch Power assessments.
 - Online calls with clubs to run through application forms/process.
 - Liaising with LAs re completion of pro-forma.
 - Promotion over a variety of social media.
 - CFAs purchasing soil samplers to support clubs.
 - Utilising FA Innovation funding to support PitchPower assessment.

- In addition to the changes required to the pre-application support already outlined, the club survey identified some additional areas for consideration relating to machinery and equipment:

- 12.7% of clubs surveyed don't have a volunteer groundskeeper capable of utilising machinery. This will be considered as part of the workforce groundskeeper's plan.
- 86% of clubs currently not involved in the programme would have been very interested in a programme that combined machinery grants and maintenance grants into one programme rather than the current separate application processes. Looking back, 77% of clubs already in the programme would also have preferred a combined approach and intend to apply for machinery in the future. As most clubs require both aspects, we will now look to develop an option for a fund that combines both elements.
- 52% of clubs would be interested robotics mowers and 72% would be interested in robotic line markers to reduce the burden on club volunteers.

LA pilots: To date, 2,418 pitches have been assessed across the 86 local authorities and unsurprisingly the pitch quality standard is significantly lower than that of the club network. 28% of pitches are good and of the 72% of pitches that are poor or basic the Grounds Management Association are reporting that the poorest pitches being used are unsafe.



RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE SUMMARY

Year 1 has been focused on creating and building relationships with clubs and contacts, aided by the new OurLearning communication platform and the development of the GMA Toolkit, providing grounds people with the opportunity to learn and share best practice.

The statistics gained within year one have already proven useful, setting an excellent foundation for years two and three; allowing us to redress previously held assumptions. The full impact of the programme will be felt at the end of year report in 2024, the end of the third year.

Year 1 Key Points

- Support from Super League clubs, namely Warrington Wolves and Hull KR have provided the opportunity to deliver face to face educational workshops where practical skills such as line marking, and renovation practices have been demonstrated.
- Initial visits began during the first week of September and to date, 25 clubs have been visited with 58 pitches tested and benchmarked in relation to quality.
- There was a focus within the National Conference League (NCL) making up 52% of all clubs visited. This analysis provides the RFL with the opportunity to advise on appropriate maintenance and protect current and potential future investments.
- 74% of clubs do not possess any form of suitable equipment to undertake what is an essential part of pitch maintenance. This evidence will provide a real focus on the areas that need improvement as the programme develops.

Key Statistics

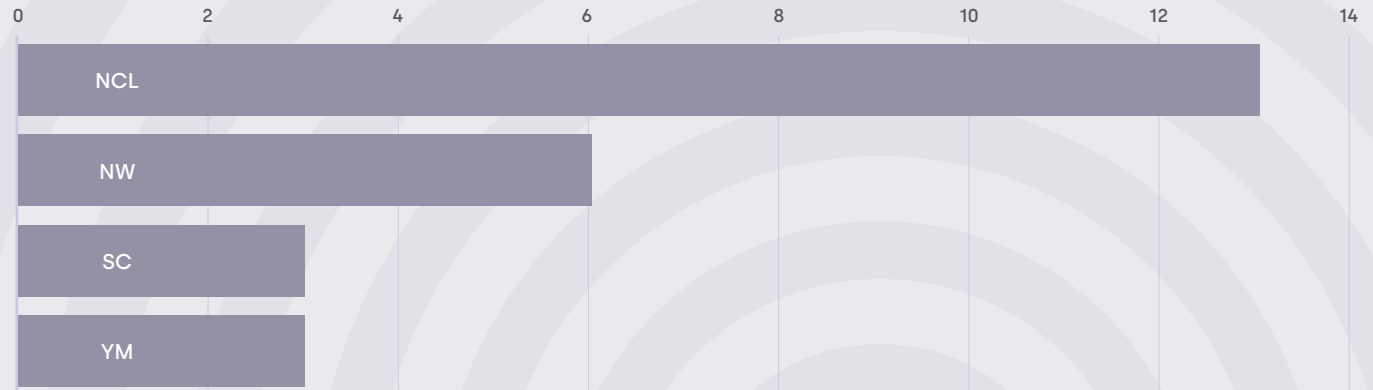
52% of clubs visited were in the NCL (Priority league)	There is an average of 1.8 volunteers per club	86% of RFL pitches fell between Basic and Good with 51% being rated as Good and 35% being rated as Basic
Where known, the average annual maintenance budget was £3-5k	49% of clubs were rated as standard for line markings with 26% having burnt in lines	The goal posts at 93% of the clubs visited were compliant
77% of clubs visited had a drainage system	95% of clubs visited did NOT have an irrigation system	55% of pitches had a 2m run-off with 27% had a 3m (recommended) run-off. (Data was not available for 18% of pitches)
59% of pitches were Youth sized, with 39% being Full sized compliant	In season, 40% of pitches were maintained in house	End of season, 42% of pitches were maintained by contractors (39% unknown)
There is an average of 2.3 pitches per site visited	68% of the pitches assessed were adult pitches	There is an average of 7.2 teams per pitch over the clubs assessed

Only 37% of clubs visited said they owned essential grounds maintenance tools

Challenges

- A challenge identified for many clubs is the volume of use (v number) against the number of available pitches as there is an average usage of 7.2 teams per pitch when all age ranges are combined.
- Further challenges relate to timings of works due to the playing season and preseason combined potentially running from December to November. This presents difficulties when considering both general maintenance and major works. A new approach is being advised in relation to pitch quality and sustainability with mini renovations being undertaken during the playing season in either April or September.
- Only 5% of clubs have an irrigation system and with stricter controls around water usage set for the coming years, a trial using wetting agents being set up at Chorley Panthers ARLFC and with ICL. The wetting agents in the trial are designed to better utilise water in the soil profile and to improve turf quality during the summer month whilst the season is in play without an irrigation system.

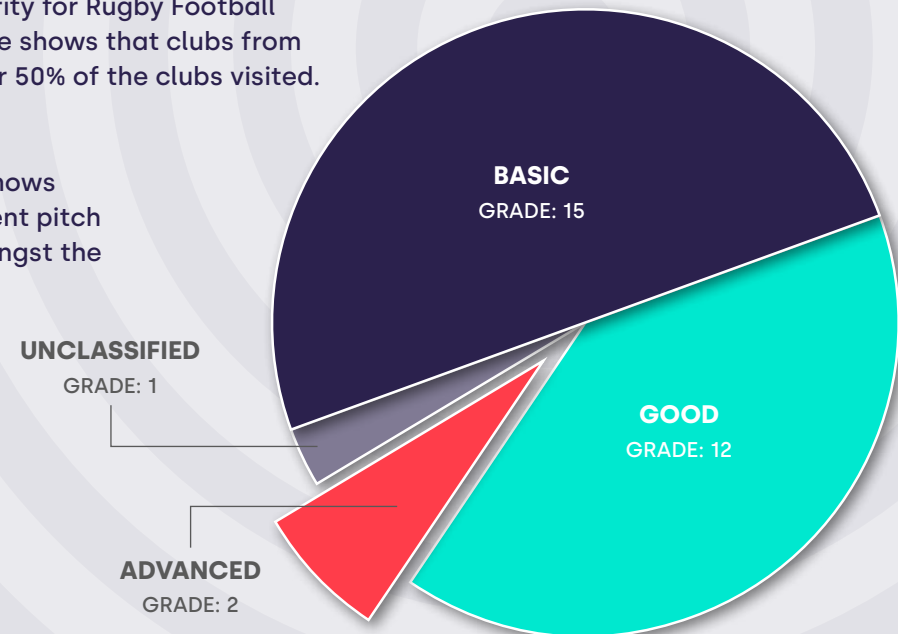
Clubs visited versus Leagues



The NCL league is a priority for Rugby Football League. The graph above shows that clubs from the NCL account for over 50% of the clubs visited.

Grades v NCL

The graph on the right shows the breakdown of different pitch assessment grades amongst the NCL clubs visited.



Pitch Assessment Averages				
	Unclassified	Basic	Good	Advanced
Length of grass	38mm	45mm	46mm	51mm
Grass cover	49%	63%	78%	84%
Surface debris	Standard	Standard	Standard	Above standard
Weeds	20%	5%	4%	0%
Thatch	29mm	18mm	16mm	13mm
Root depth	183mm	176mm	176mm	128mm
Growing medium	Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous
Pitch surface levels	Below Standard	Below Standard	Below Standard	Below Standard
Compaction	Slow Draining	Slow Draining	Slow Draining	Free Draining

The PQS scoring system is weighted differently for each criterion. This explains why some scores appear higher on average across the levels of quality.

The tables below show that on average, the higher the grade of the pitch, the more training and match minutes it is able to support.

Average Training Minutes/grade/age				
	Unclassified	Basic	Good	Advanced
Open Age	0	135	105	80
16 to 18	0	0	225	75
13 to 16	0	240	248	163
6 to 12	0	165	255	140

Average Match Minutes/grade/age				
	Unclassified	Basic	Good	Advanced
Open Age	90	135	165	130
16 to 18	90	0	165	85
13 to 16	90	240	248	193
6 to 12	90	165	315	190

RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE

RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE KPIs AND MILESTONES FOR YEAR 1

KPIs		Year 1 Target	Year 1 Results	Year 1 % (if applicable)
1.	To move the identified 'maintenance rating' of RFL pitches moved forward. Increase pitch rating number or maintain good or better standard.	Identify	Met	
2.	Number of pitches assessed via face-to-face visits	100	57	57%
3.	Number of pitches assessed via PitchPower	Develop	Met	
4.	The number of grounds volunteers to have accessed informal training	100	24	24%
5.	The number of grounds volunteers to have accessed formal GMA courses	100	3	3%
6.	Number of active support pitch advisors?	Identify	Met	
7.	Number of RFL volunteer memberships	Identify	Met	
8.	Improve the quality of 800 RFL pitches by 2024	Identify	Met	
9.	Provide increased capacity for 1000 more matches	Identify	Met	
10.	Webinars per year	4	1	25%
11.	Targets for Membership Profile	Identify	Met	
12.	RFL Mentors - Identified, trained, and deployed	Identify	Met	
13.	Grounds volunteers being mentored	Identify	Met	
14.	Support Pitch Advisor available to every RFL club in England by 2024	Identify	Met	
15.	Every member of the support network to undertake at least 3 CPD/training courses/mentoring sessions by 2024	Identify	Met	
16.	GMA Toolkit - Longer views	Develop	Met	
17.	GMA Toolkit - Increase dwell time	Develop	Met	
18.	GMA Toolkit - Decrease bounce rate	Develop	Met	

Comments on KPIs

- Contact with clubs has been completed as per the information on the RFL databases. New contacts will be added to these as and when updates in contacts are required.
- The grounds volunteers are currently being engaged, following initial visits.
- The GMA courses are recommended during each visit and within each report, further engagement will be achieved in year 2.
- One webinar and one workshop delivered. Continued research into the most interesting and relevant subject matter will continue.

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION SUMMARY

The Pitch Advisory Service (PAS) welcomed the Rugby Football Union (RFU) to the programme in April 2021 and began building the network of 1 Key Account Manager (with regional coverage) and 3 Regional Pitch Advisors (RPAs) covering the North, Midlands, Southwest, and Southeast of the country.

Initial plans were to build a strong relationship between the GMA, the RFU and the clubs through online webinars and face to face engagement.

Year 1 Key Points

- The RPAs; along with their RFU Facility Team; initially focused on targeting a select number of clubs to visit, report, and advise on pitch improvement.
- The first official visit took place in October 2021 and at the end of March 2022 the team had visited a total number of **148** clubs, with **400** pitches tested and benchmarked in relation to quality. These clubs will be contacted during the summer of 2022 to offer further support, with the aim to revisit those that have implemented recommendations since the initial visit during Year 2 to quantify improvement.
- The team played a vital role in the development of key support mechanisms such as the Expression of Interest Form (EOI), the GMA Toolkit, and the Performance Quality Standard (PQS) measurements required to benchmark the quality of the pitches tested.

- Rugby Grounds Connected (RGC) is a key initiative for the Rugby Football Union programme. The RFU and the GMA understand how important this is to the sustainability of the game; particularly at grass roots level and we have already seen increased engagement during Year 1.
- Alongside the RGC is the growing network of volunteer pitch advisors up and down the country. Their passion and enthusiasm for the sustainability of the sport will play a key role in the success of the programme.
- Webinar attendance and feedback from visits and RPA engagement has been encouraging with 2 webinars having been achieved.
- The method of reporting pitch analysis will evolve during Year 2 with the introduction of PitchPower 2.0. The PAS team have been instrumental in the development of this app, designed to be easy to use and accessible for volunteers across the country to benchmark the quality of their pitches and begin their journey of pitch improvement.
- A GMA Rugby Football Union Level 1 Online course was created and offered to clubs, specifically aimed at volunteers. Since the launch of this, there have been more than 40 individuals that have completed this course.

Challenges

- RPA recruitment finalised September 2021.
- Full RPA deployment November 2021.
- Transition to PAS required regular dialogue and reassurance to VPAs and wider RGC network.
- PP 2.0 delays have impacted VPA and RPA training.
- A lack of training pitches has been identified, particularly in the Southwest region.

In conclusion, the RFU element of the PAS is in a strong position moving into Year 2. The number of clubs visited, and pitches tested has exceeded expectations and the foundations are in place to continue supporting clubs and volunteers to raise the standard of both their pitches and their individual skills.

The continued development of the GMA Toolkit, PitchPower 2.0 and the offers that are available through the GMA in relation to Learning and Education will be key to the ongoing success of the programme.

Key Statistics

<p>26% of clubs visited were in Level 7</p>	<p>The average age of RFU pitches was 20+ years at 88%</p>	<p>84% of RFU pitches fell between Basic and Good with 43% being rated as Good and 41% being rated as Basic</p>
<p>The most common response regarding annual maintenance budget was unknown, but where known the average was £6-£10k</p>	<p>The most common cost of recommendations made following site visits was between £6-£10k (28%) and £1-£2k (27%)</p>	<p>A full end of season renovation was recommended to 38% of pitches with basic maintenance being recommended on 28% of pitches</p>
<p>The average minutes used during the week was 162 (45%) with the average minutes used at the weekend was 200 (55%)</p>	<p>45% of pitches had floodlights</p>	<p>33% of pitches did not conform to the 5-metre rule (under 5m)</p>
<p>39% of pitches measured were Full sized compliant</p>	<p>In season, 51% of pitches were maintained in house</p>	<p>48% of pitches had their end of season renovation undertaken by contractors</p>
<p>40% of clubs visited had below standard surface levels</p>	<p>82% of maintenance routines needed improvement</p>	<p>There is an average of 1.8 ground volunteers per club</p>
<p>41% of pitches have a drainage system</p>	<p>67% of pitches did not experience any postponements</p>	<p>Volunteers made up 97% of all grounds people</p>

This table illustrates the average Performance Quality Standard (PQS) measurements against the overall grade of the pitches tested.

Pitch Assessment Averages				
	Unclassified	Basic	Good	Advanced
Length of grass	72mm	52mm	61mm	50mm
Grass cover	54%	50%	77%	89%
Surface debris	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
Weeds	17%	7%	4%	1%
Thatch	31mm	23mm	17mm	15mm
Root depth	79mm	106mm	111mm	144mm
Growing medium	Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous
Pitch surface levels	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
Compaction	Standing Water	Slow Draining	Slow Draining	Free Draining

Comparisons

- You can see from the table that where a pitch has measured BASIC within the PQS calculator, a major contributing factor to this is GRASS COVER with an average score of 50%.
- A pitch that has been graded as GOOD measures on average, a GRASS COVER rating of 77% so this will be an important area of focus in relation to recommendations to improve pitches.
- It is important to consider usage and current maintenance practices when analysing the data. You will see from the average minutes usage per week/weekend by pitch grade graph (page 28) that on average, a GOOD or ADVANCED pitch is being subjected to a higher level of usage than a BASIC pitch.
- There may be several factors contributing to this such as soil type, drainage, irrigation, and general maintenance practices but suggests that on average, a BASIC pitch does not necessarily fall into this grade because of excessive usage.
- The PQS scoring system is weighted differently for each criterion. This explains why some scores appear higher on average across the levels of quality.



RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Explanation of stats

Most pitches tested (91) were within levels 7, 8 and 9 with the most common benchmark of either BASIC or GOOD being calculated.

Grades v Level 4		
Grade		
Basic	1	17%
Good	1	17%
Advanced	2	33%
Unclassified	2	33%
Total	6	100%

Grades v Level 7		
Grade		
Basic	13	36%
Good	16	44%
Advanced	7	19%
Unclassified	0	0%
Total	36	100%

Grades v Level 10		
Grade		
Basic	3	27%
Good	7	64%
Advanced	1	9%
Unclassified	0	0%
Total	11	100%

Grades v Level 5		
Grade		
Basic	4	27%
Good	6	40%
Advanced	4	27%
Unclassified	1	7%
Total	15	100%

Grades v Level 8		
Grade		
Basic	12	41%
Good	14	48%
Advanced	3	10%
Unclassified	0	0%
Total	29	100%

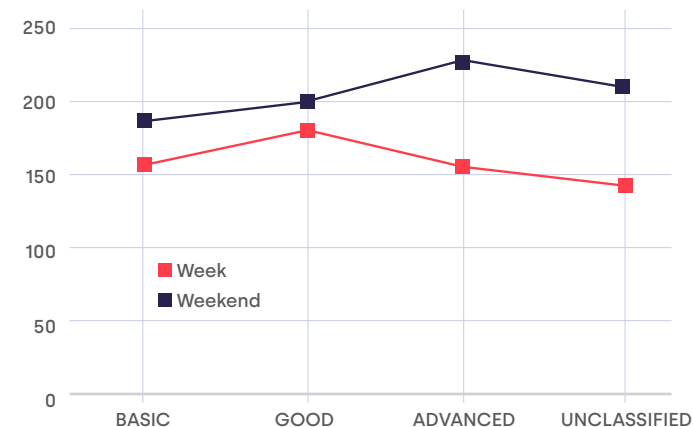
Grades v Level 11		
Grade		
Basic	0	0%
Good	0	0%
Advanced	2	100%
Unclassified	0	0%
Total	2	100%

Grades v Level 6		
Grade		
Basic	3	19%
Good	10	63%
Advanced	3	19%
Unclassified	0	0%
Total	16	100%

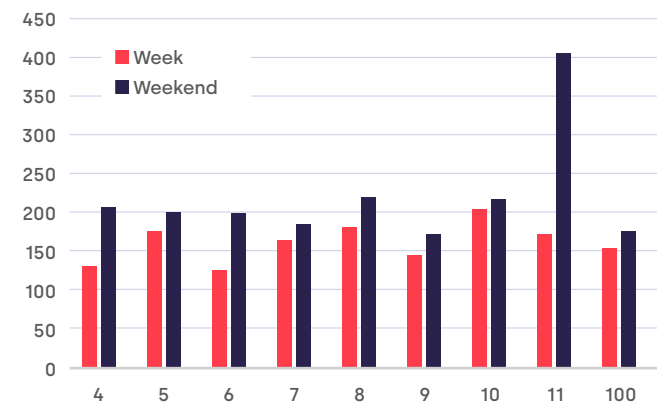
Grades v Level 9		
Grade		
Basic	8	31%
Good	11	42%
Advanced	7	27%
Unclassified	0	0%
Total	26	100%

Grades v Level 100*		
Grade		
Basic	2	29%
Good	3	43%
Advanced	0	0%
Unclassified	2	29%
Total	7	100%

Average minutes usage per week/weekend by pitch grade

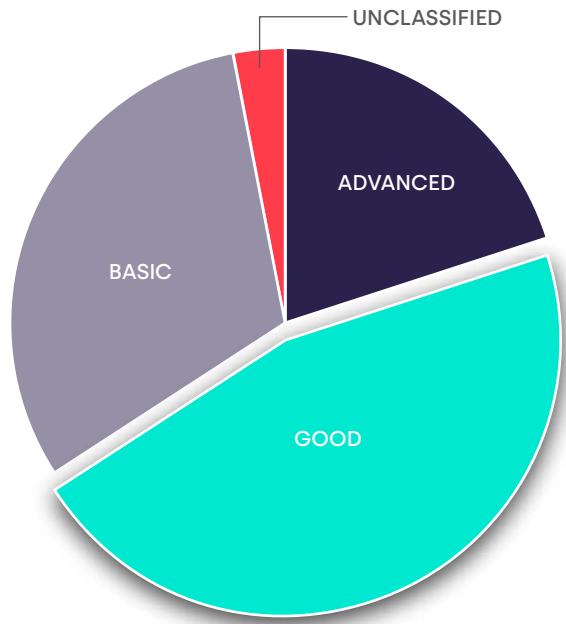


Average minutes usage per week/weekend by level



*Level 100 refers to clubs that are in the county league structure as opposed to the RFU leagues and therefore do not have a level.

PQS grades of pitches tested



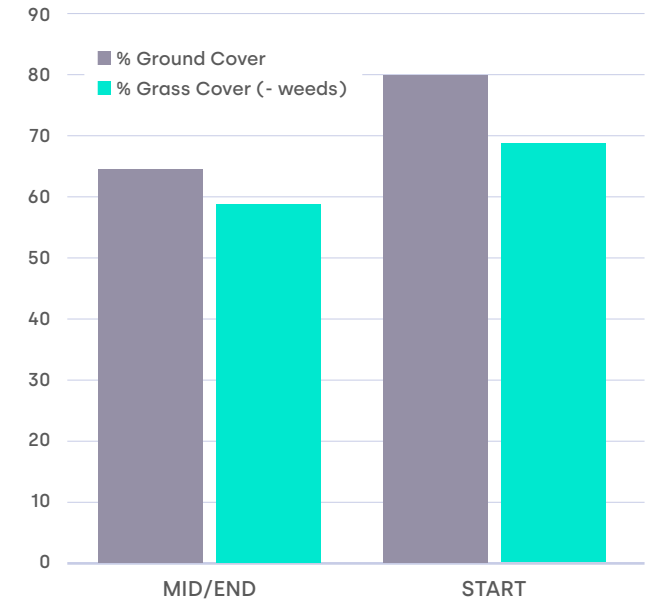
In total, the PQS grades for all pitches tested to date are 46 BASIC, 68 GOOD, 29 ADVANCED and 5 UNCLASSIFIED.

Grade of pitches with less than 5m run-off



The above graphic illustrates that the majority of pitches that had run-offs of less than 5 metres were in the BASIC and GOOD categories, with the majority in BASIC.

Average % of Ground and Grass Cover by season



There are two specific PQS Testing windows. Start of season which runs from September – December and mid/end of season which runs from January – May. The scoring in relation to specific measurements is slightly different depending on the time of year the pitch is being tested to consider usage, and periods where the grass plant is either active or dormant.

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION KPIs AND MILESTONES FOR YEAR 1

KPIs	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Results	Year 1 % (if applicable)
1. Number of pitches tested and benchmarked for quality	150	400	267%
2. Pitches that have maintained their PQS level or moved forward one step.	Developing	Met	
3. Number of face-to-face site assessments undertaken	120	133	123%
4. Number of pitches assessed via PitchPower	Developing	Met	
5. Annual Net Promoter score for the PAS of above:	75	No data	0%
6. Annual Net Promoter score for the PitchPower of above:	75	N/A	0%
7. Maintenance rating data to be recorded and maintained on 2000 pitches by end of March 2024	200	400	200%
8. The number of RFU owned World Rugby regulation 28 AGPs maintenance review meeting - reports provided	4	7	175%
9. The number of grounds volunteers to have accessed informal training	100	435	435%
10. The number of grounds volunteers to have accessed formal GMA courses	50	42	84%
11. Number of active support pitch advisors	12	14	117%
12. Number of RGC memberships	1300	1380	106%
13. RFU to secure funding for 150 grounds volunteers to complete L1 and L2 courses	5	0	0%
14. RGC webinars per year	4	2	50%
15. Run diversity and inclusion programmes (including the Women's World Cup)	Developing	Met	
16. RGC Mentors - Identified, trained, and deployed	Identify	Met	
17. Grounds volunteers being mentored	1	4	400%
18. % of GMA/PAS activity within RFU Constituent Bodies	75%	No data	0%
19. 30% of RFU CBs to have funded RGC programmes in Y2	Developing	Met	
20. Every newly recruited support network advisor to have undertaken at least 3 x CPD	1	1	100%
21. Every club in England to have access to the Pitch Contractor Partnership (PCP) by 2024	10%	0	0%
22. GMA Toolkit - Longer views	7036	7703	109%
23. GMA Toolkit - Increase dwell time	00:01:29	00:01:41	113%
24. GMA Toolkit - Decrease bounce rate (%)	69.73	75.73	92%

Comments on KPIs

5 & 6: The Annual Net Promoter score will be discussed as an option to obtain when contacting clubs regarding progress and arranging revisits.

13: In relation to the RFU securing funding for 150 grounds volunteers to complete L1 and L2 courses, a pilot is to be rolled out in Year 2.

18: Percentage of GMA/PAS activity within RFU Constituent Bodies – RPAs do not work directly with CBs, but this will likely change in Year 2.

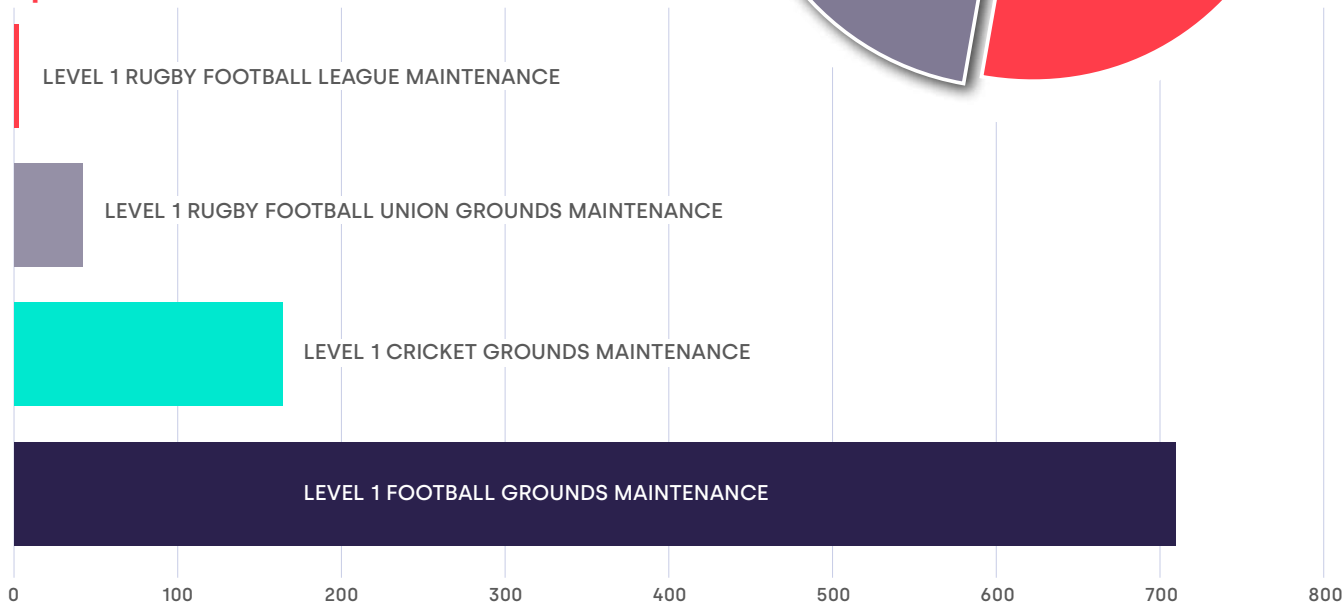
21: Every club in England to have access to the Pitch Contractor Partnership (PCP) by 2024 – the PCP is being reviewed and there will be an update in Year 2.

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION SUMMARY

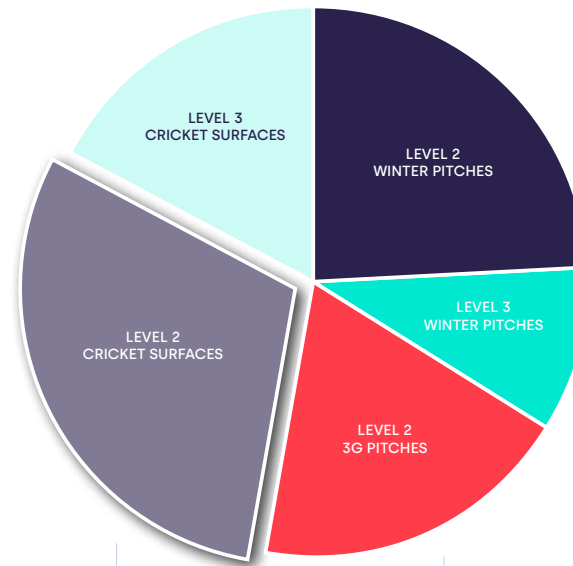
Technical and Learning

There remains an obvious correlation between the number of online registrations as a direct result of PitchPower and the NGBs that form part of Phase 3. Currently it will be a lengthy process to breakdown the actual detail of who enrolled for what purpose. However, the GMA's Digital Transformation Project continues to make improvements within their CRM, with the launch of their new website planned for Autumn 2022.

Level 1 Online Course Enrolments - April 2021 to March 2022



Level 2 and 3 Online Course Enrolments April 2021 to March 2022



Membership

In September 2021, external consultants b2b carried out an audit of the GMA's memberships. In consultation with the NGBs, they made recommendations for a GMA NGB Membership scheme.

b2b identified that there is a greater opportunity for GMA to create and forge stronger partnerships and alliances with the NGBs.

Strengthening conversations and positioning the value of GMA to the NGBs will help gain access and privileges to sport specific NGB benefits such as learning, content events, awards which can be cascaded to GMA members as part of their membership benefits as well as cementing key strategic relationships.

The purpose of the GMA/NGB Membership Scheme would be to:

- Create a sustainable approach to pitch improvements and those that maintain them.
- Upskill, develop, and maintain standards of grounds people through GMA training.
- Create a diverse and credible programme and workforce.
- All access to GMA membership.
- The goal should be that mandatory training and membership is part of any clubs/ organisations that receive NGB funding.

Turfcare Advisory project sources

- 61% of all projects came from a GMA enquiry.
- 39% of all projects came from a PAS enquiry.

PAS DIGITAL PLATFORMS

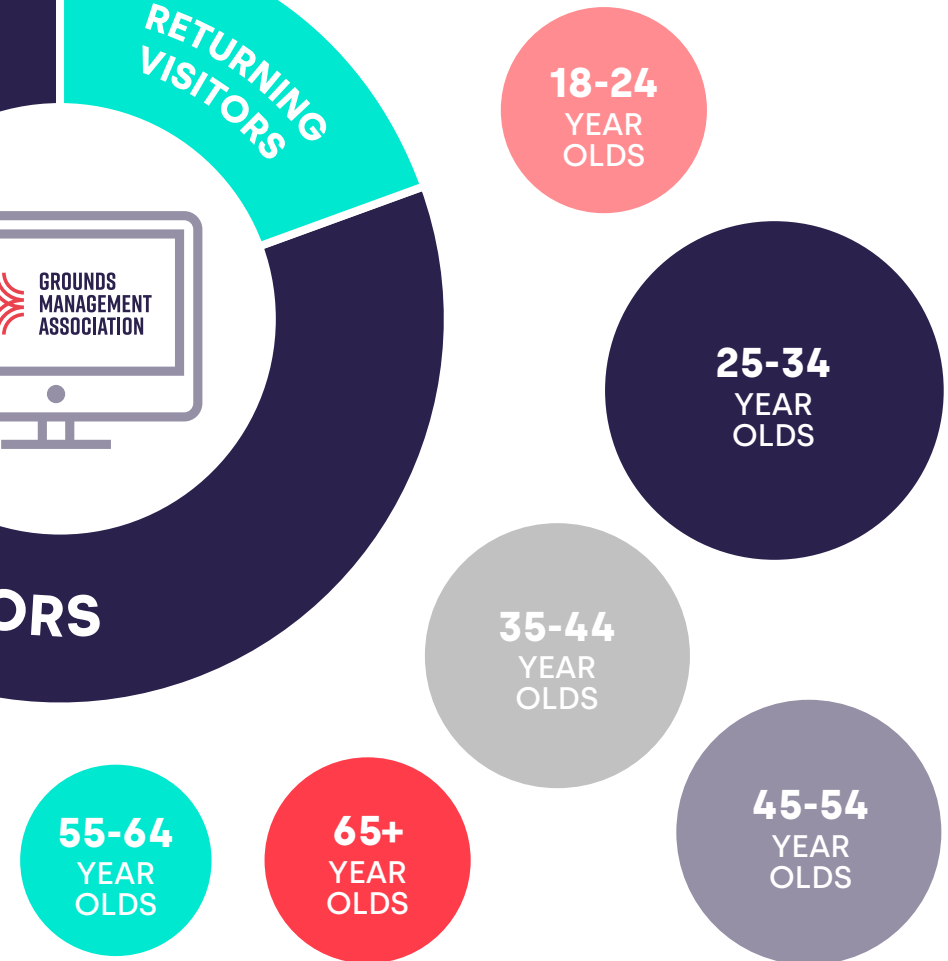
GMA Website

- During 2021, 614,825 pages were viewed on the GMA website.
- Over 80% of visitors were new to the site, with 19.7% being returning visitors.
- Over 70% of people that visited identified as male, with just under 30% identifying as female.
- Over 50% of visitors accessed the GMA website via a mobile device.
- Most visitors accessed the GMA website via an organic search or by entering the website address directing.
- Over 63% of visitors accessed the website via Facebook.
- The most popular page is the jobs board with over 17% of visitors accessing this page.

GMA Website Audience



GMA Website Visitor Age Demographic

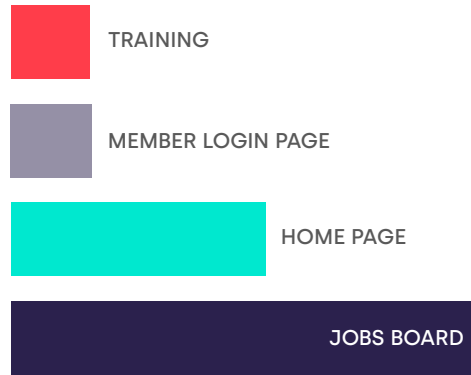


GMA Website Visitor Demographic

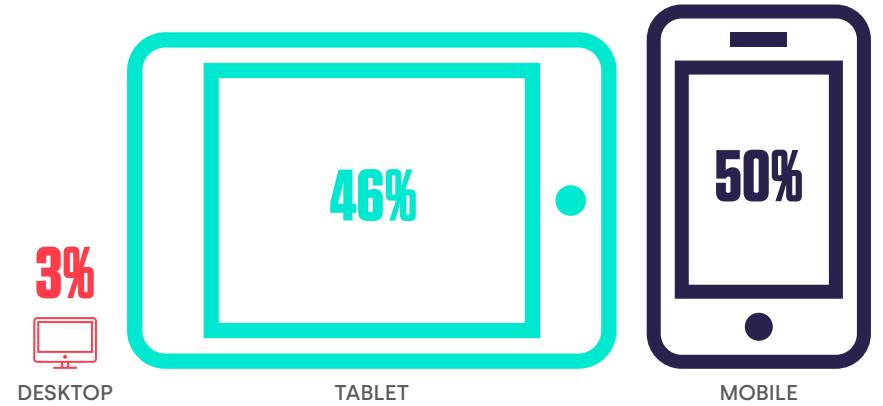
Men 70.6% Women 29.4%



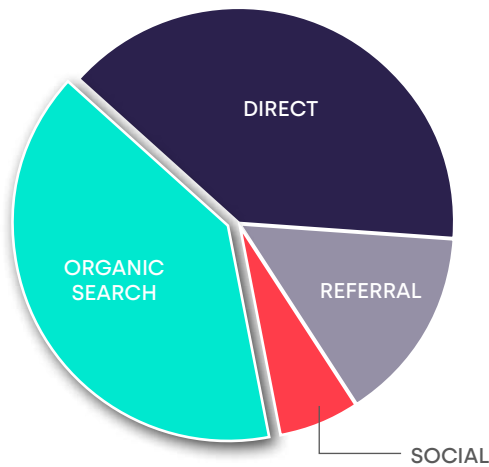
Top four most popular pages



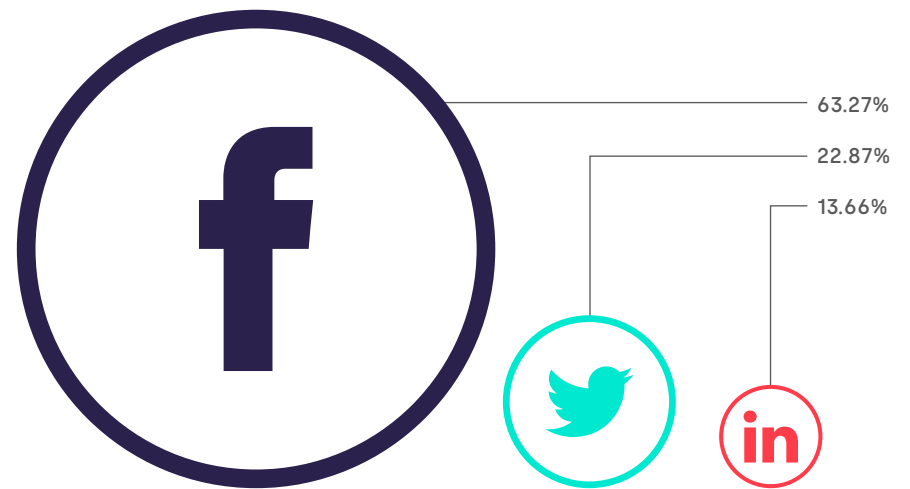
Devices used to access website



Where was the GMA website accessed from?



Most popular social sites used to gain access to the GMA website



GMA TOOLKIT

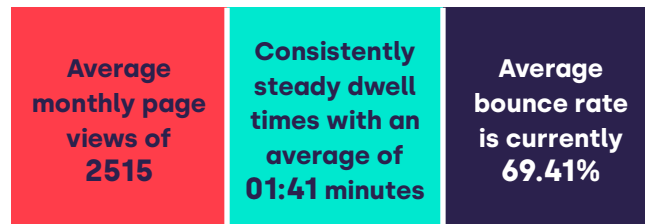
The GMA Toolkit offers grounds maintenance information for Cricket, Football, Rugby Football League, and Rugby Football Union aimed at the volunteer grounds person.

Each NGB has an annual KPI to meet, which is based upon their sport specific baseline figures from 2020/2021. Achievement against KPI target can be seen on the individual sport KPI tables.

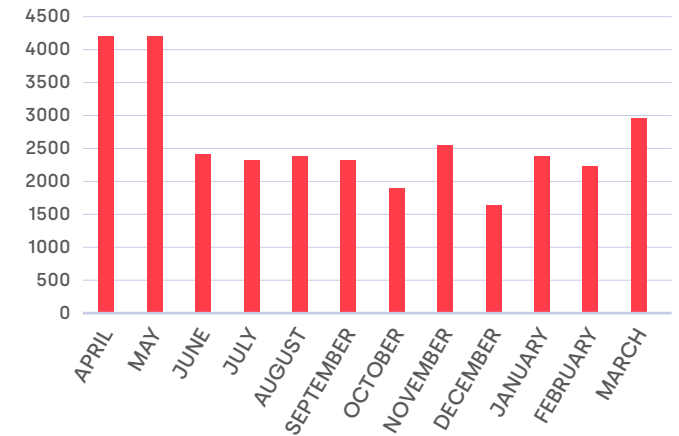


CRICKET TOOLKIT PAGES

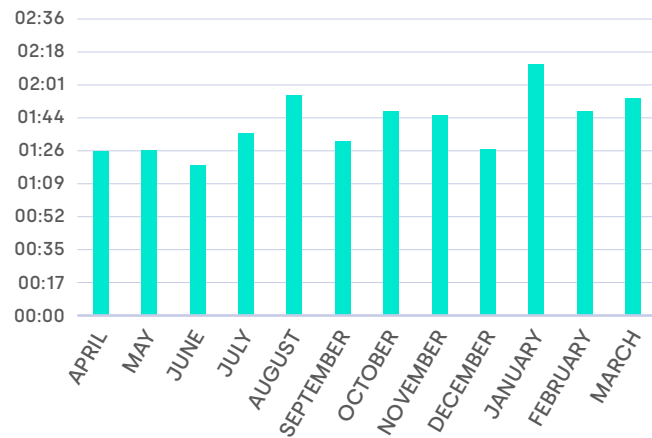
Cricket directs a lot of traffic to the GMA Toolkit and uses it as a primary information source.



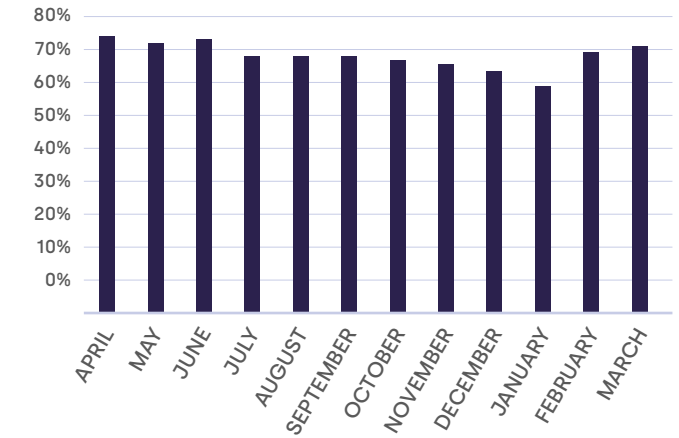
Page views 2021 to 2022



Dwell Time 2021 to 2022 MINUTES:SECONDS



Bounce Rate 2021 to 2022

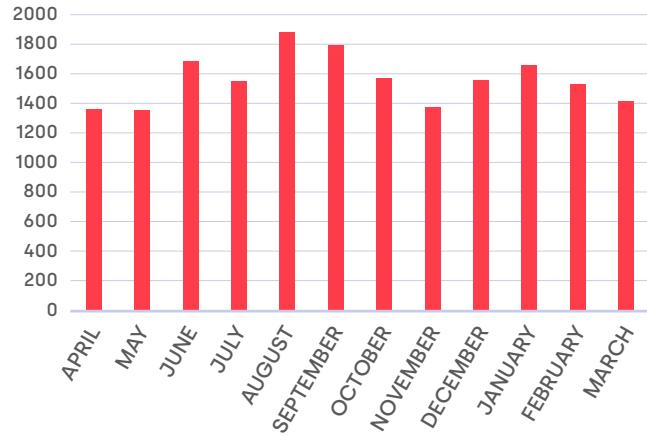


FOOTBALL TOOLKIT PAGES

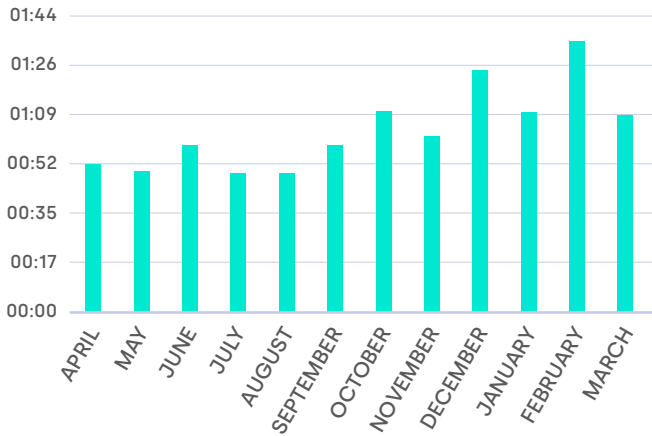
The Dwell Time increase from October onwards aligns with the checks that the Senior RPA carried out prior to updating the football pages.



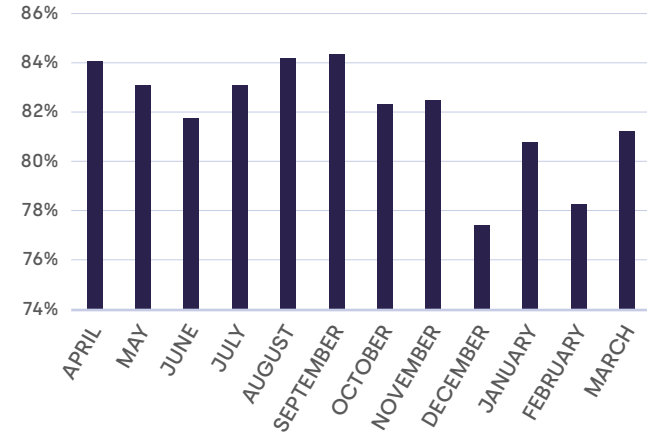
Page views 2021 to 2022



Dwell Time 2021 to 2022 MINUTES:SECONDS



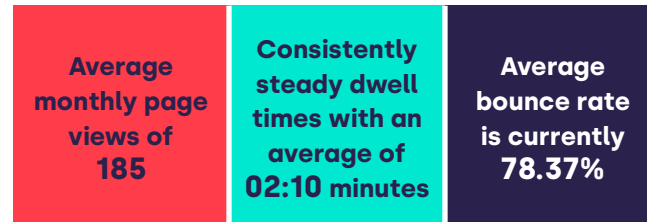
Bounce Rate 2021 to 2022



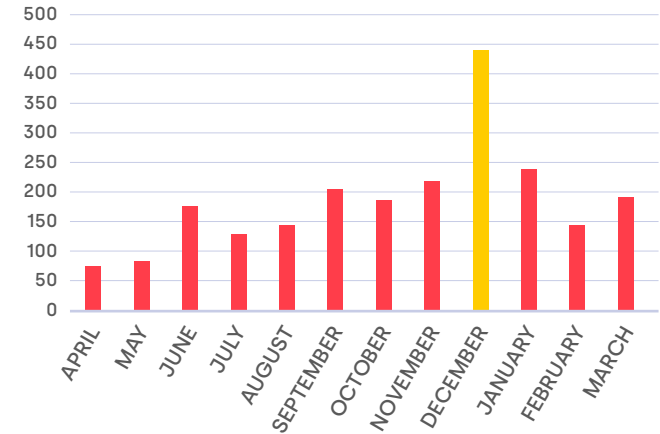
RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE TOOLKIT PAGES

The yellow columns show the impact following the Toolkit being highlighted in the RFL club newsletter.

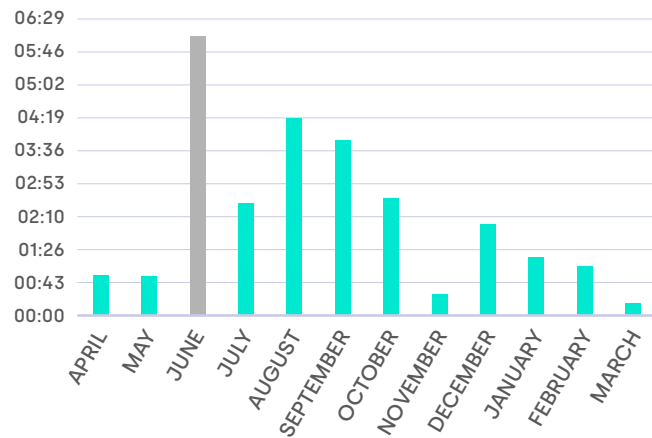
The grey columns shows where the KAM checked the RFL pages before editing.



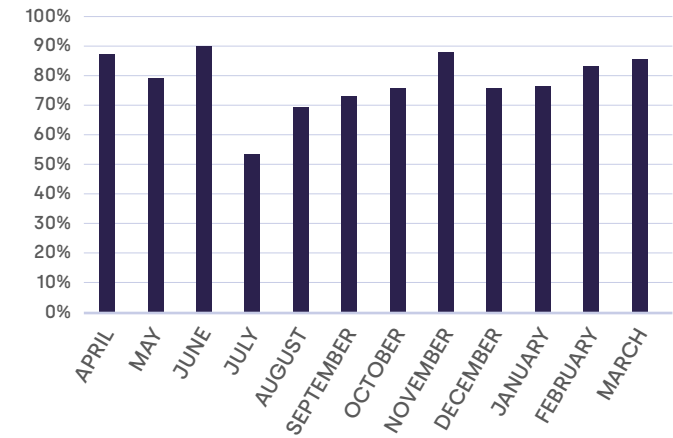
Page views 2021 to 2022



Dwell Time 2021 to 2022 MINUTES:SECONDS



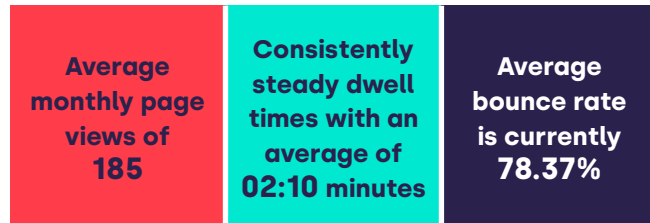
Bounce Rate 2021 to 2022



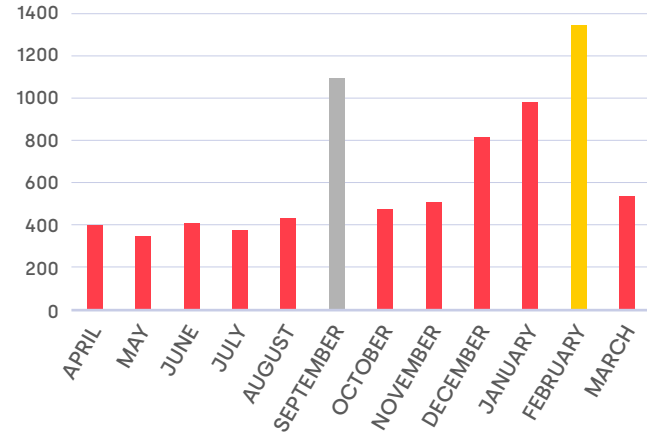
RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION TOOLKIT PAGES

The yellow columns show the impact following the RGC webinar on 02/02/2022.

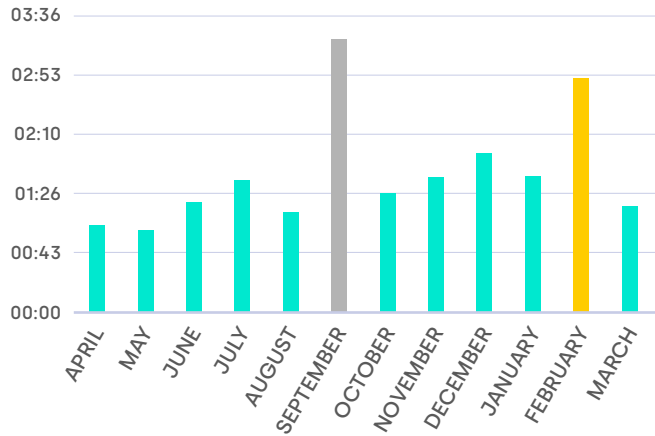
The grey columns shows where the KAM checked the RFU pages before editing.



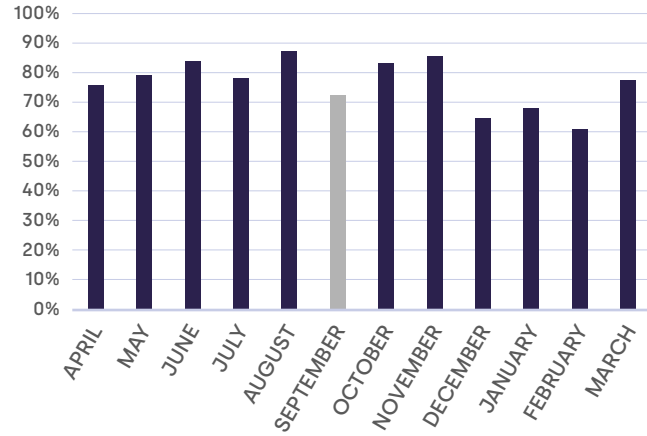
Page views 2021 to 2022



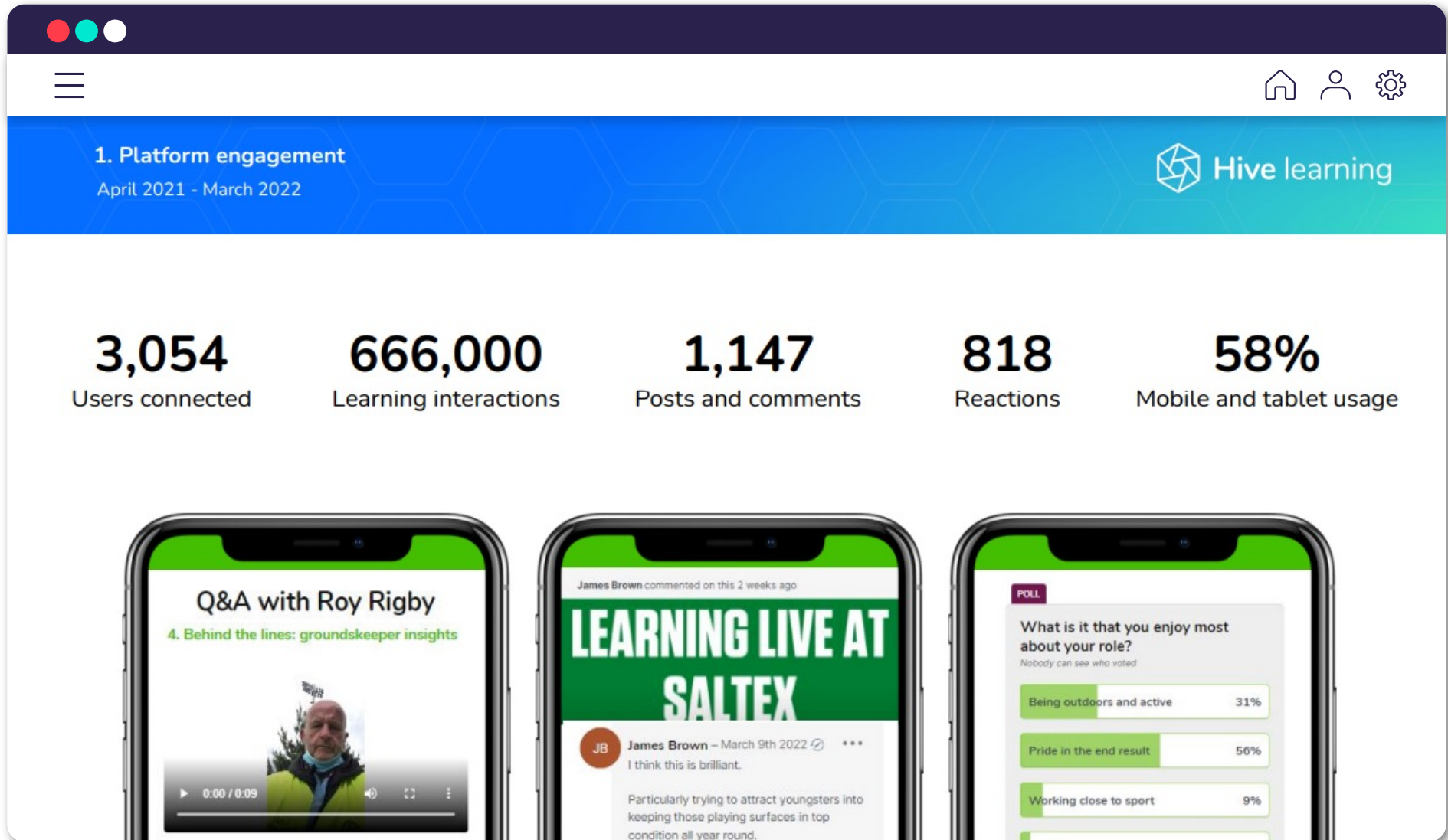
Dwell Time 2021 to 2022 MINUTES:SECONDS



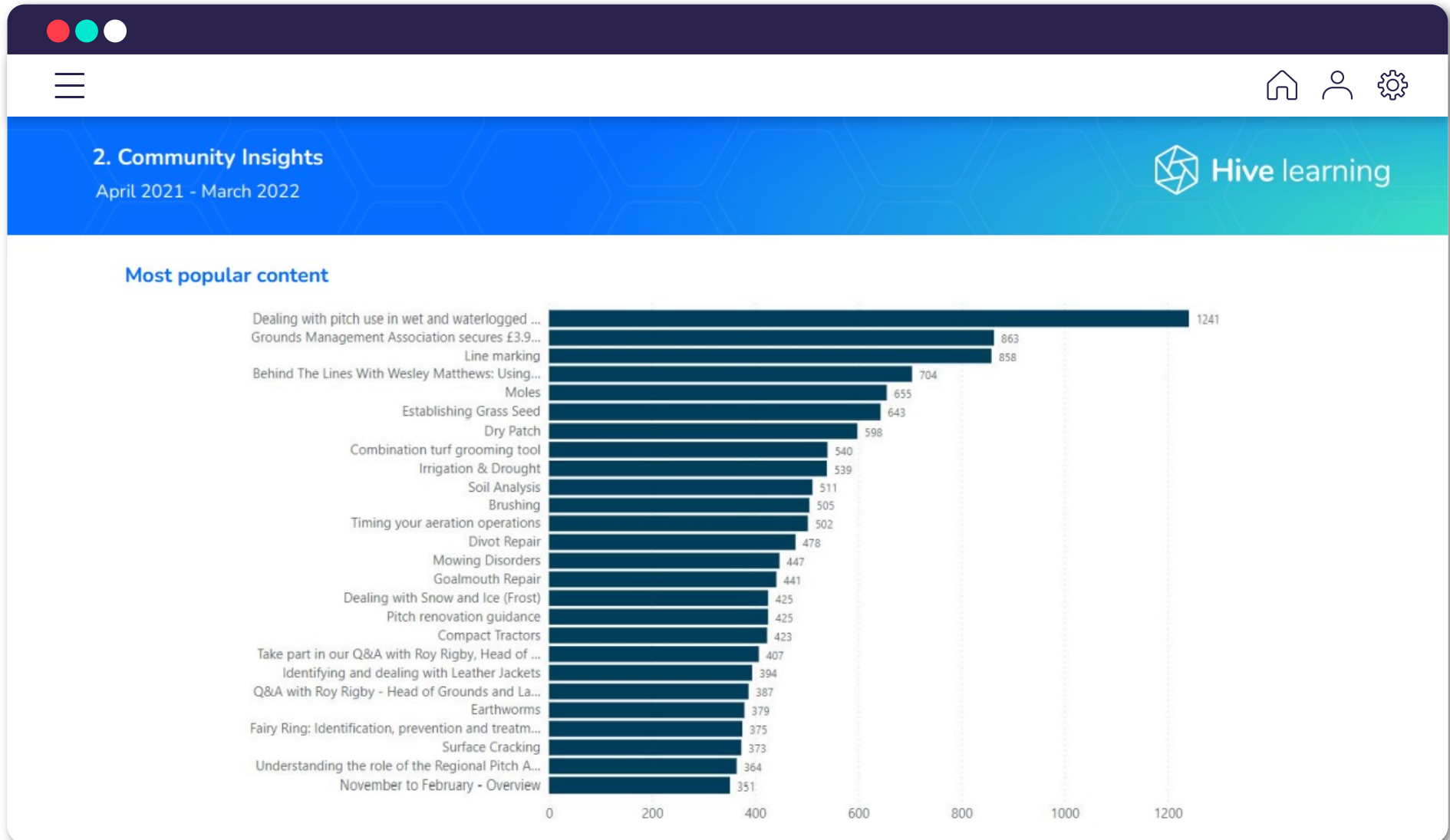
Bounce Rate 2021 to 2022



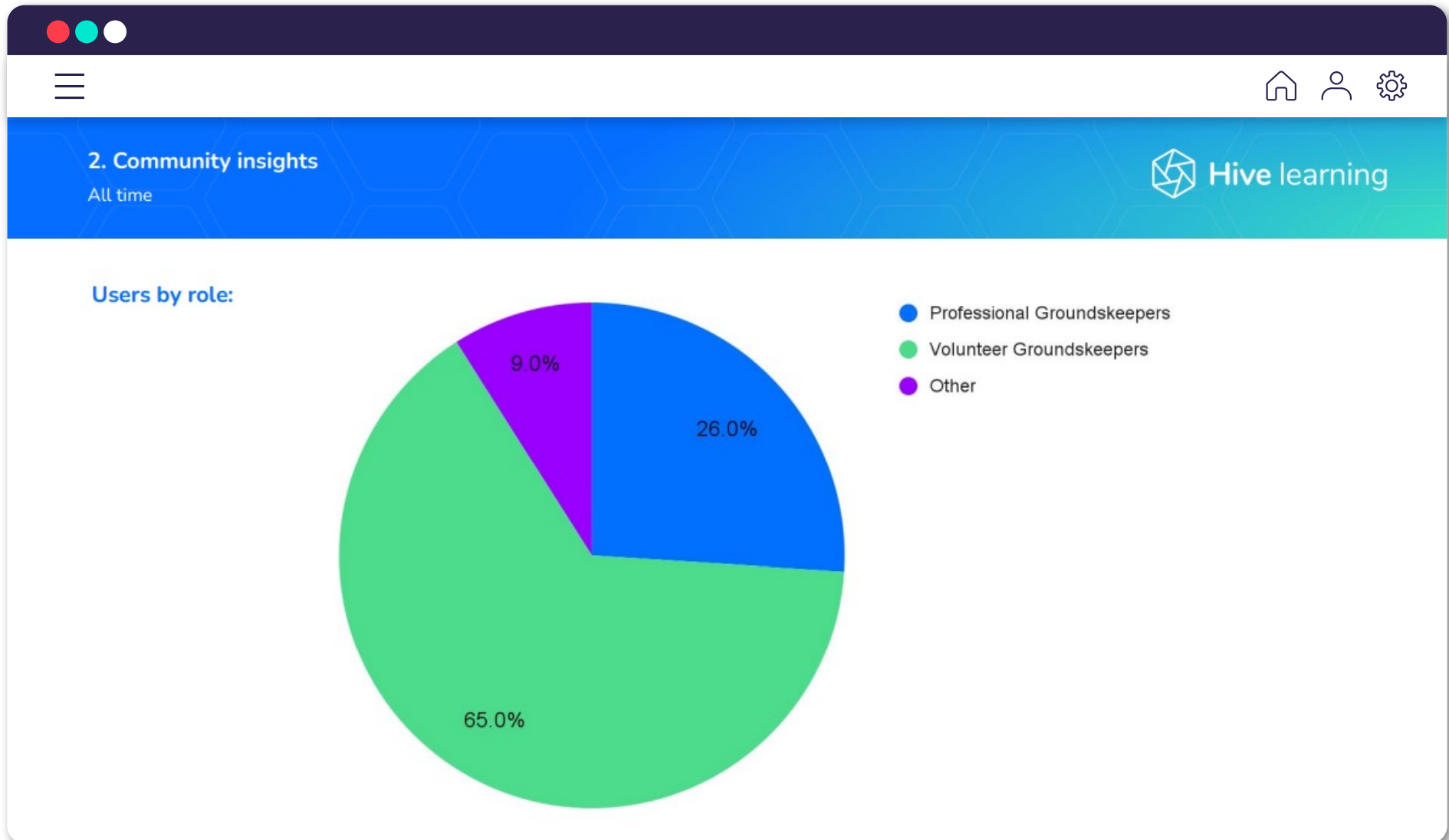
FF Online Groundskeeping Community



Most popular content



Users by role



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE – INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Looking at environmental impact will be key to ensure that PAS and grassroots/recreational sport is played, supported, and enjoyed in the coming years. Legislation such as water charters, reduction in the use of fossil fuels and other traditional and accepted practices within grounds management will have to change and adapt to fall in line with the Government aims and global acceptance around these areas; looking at innovation has been and will continue to be high on the agenda for PAS and the GMA.

Robot Mower Pilot Update

An auto-mower pilot was carried out during 2018 to 2021 to assess the strengths and weakness in use of existing non-GPS enabled autonomous robotic mowers versus more traditional maintenance equipment with a human operator, where volunteers weren't available or where the club didn't have their own equipment.

Outcome

It was agreed on the basis of the pilot findings that certain auto-mowers would be eligible for funding through the Football Stadia Improvement Fund and that National League Step level clubs would be able to apply on a case-by-case basis for use at their stadia pitch sites. This includes a detailed club questionnaire and requires a PitchPower inspection. An initial pool of 6-8 applications has been agreed with a review process to take place after this.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Provide a functional mowing solution where a club/organisation doesn't have volunteers.	GPS versions would be better suited to larger community sites.
Low noise.	If no suitable access to electricity within the cable boundary, initial installation could be expensive.
Variable mowing height which is managed by a phone app.	Only really suitable for enclosed sites, if the machinery is disturbed or tampered with it will stop and need to be manually restarted.
Mowers are more cost-effective than employing a grounds person or contractor.	The cutting pattern is sporadic meaning some areas may be longer than others as it commits to cutting the whole area every 2-3 days, which can leave track marks and doesn't stripe the pitch.
On single pitch enclosed sites, mowers are a viable mowing solution to maintain the frequency and quality of cut.	No flexibility to use other grooming attachments and mowers piloted work on a random cut basis do not mow in typical blocks, however, the presentational drawbacks are outweighed by the improved turf quality.
The money saved by using an auto mower could be reinvested into other pitch maintenance works.	
The two main viable options are cheaper than a compact tractor and cutting deck or roller mower as routinely, currently funded.	

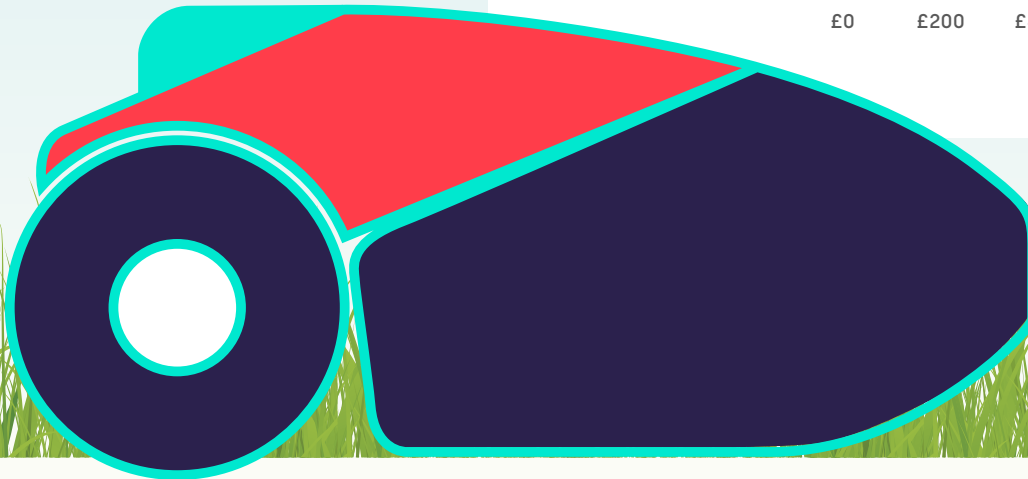
Pilots with GPS enabled auto-mowers capable of mowing up to 8 full size pitches three times per week are underway. PitchPower will now be used to monitor the impact on pitch quality 3 times over the 12-month period. If successful consideration for funding inclusion within the

Football Foundation small grants scheme will be taken to the FF board. This would open up the possibility for wider use on multi-pitch community sites and may lead to further pilots with local authorities where this technology could have the biggest positive impact.

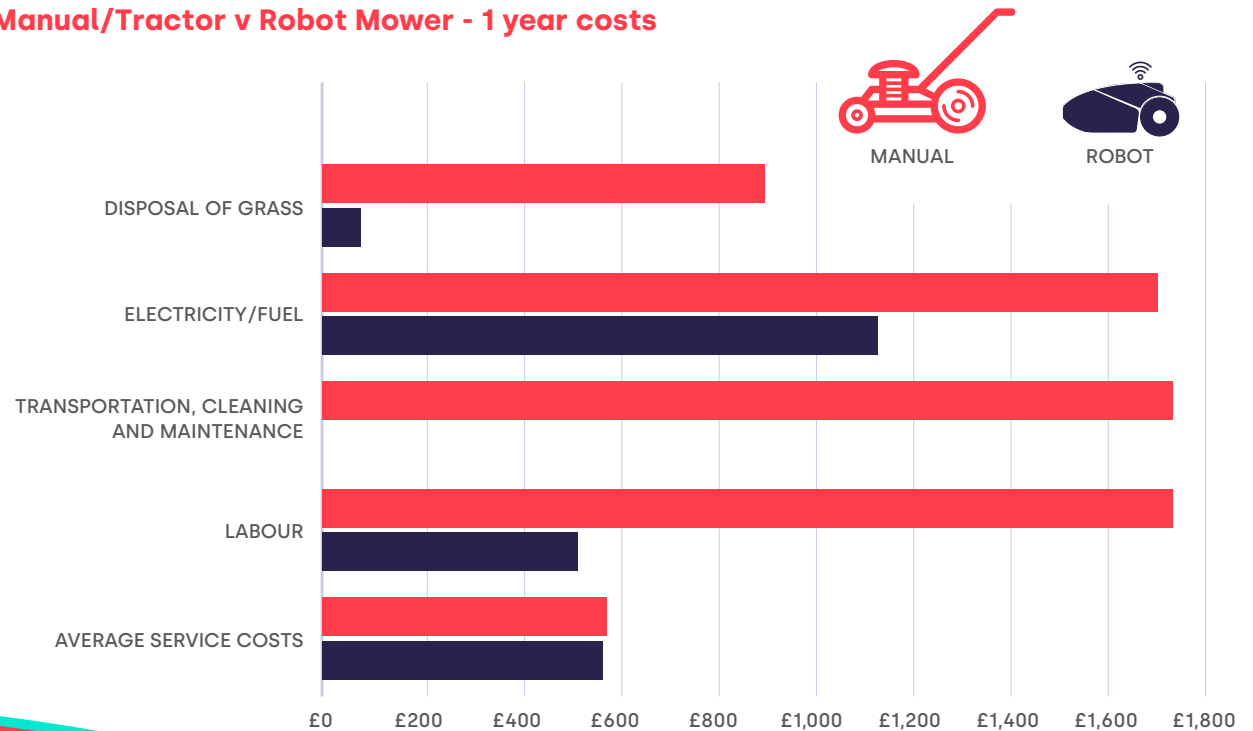
Cost comparisons

The following is based on equipment suitable to maintain between 1-2 adult pitches and the robot mowers detailed are also adequate to cover an area of this size. All prices are ex VAT.

- Traditional compact tractor with mid mounted cutting deck £16,500-£19,500.
- Traditional compact tractor with a tractor mounted rear roller mower £19,000 - £23,500.
- Robot mower 1. - £11,000 including installation up to 14,000m². Care and service plans approx. £1,000 per annum.
- Robot mower 2. x 2 units required per pitch. 4 units required for 14,000m² – £14,000. Care and service plans approx. £800 per annum.



Manual/Tractor v Robot Mower - 1 year costs



FUTURE INNOVATIONS

Soil Recycling (Rugby Football Union)

With the increasing pressure of rising costs and the need for us all to exercise best practice when it comes to environmental sustainability, trials and investigations are underway to minimise the amount of top dressing required when undertaking a full renovation.

An option that is being explored is the use of a recycling dresser which; when used on appropriate soil structures; can pull soil from depth and distribute across the surface, halving the amount of new material required. This method will not only save money but also reduce the carbon footprint created by minimising quantity and transport of materials.

A case study on the findings of this trial will be produced in the end of year report for 2022/23.

Wetting agent pilot (Rugby Football League)

As a contact sport which is primarily played throughout the summer months, the pitches can

deteriorate during hot dry spells due to a lack of irrigation systems in the community game. Pitches can become hard, lose grass coverage, and take longer to recover when the rain returns.

Wetting agents have been used for years to help prevent rapid dry down and to prevent hydrophobicity (water repellence) in rootzones but there has been little research done into the effect of wetting agents on indigenous soil pitches. By applying a wetting agent prior to rainfall through the spring/summer months it is hoped that the deterioration of pitches can be minimised. This could lead to an improvement in playing quality with less consumables like seed and fertiliser, which are currently experiencing very high price increases, required to reinstate the pitches that would typically be needed after drought.

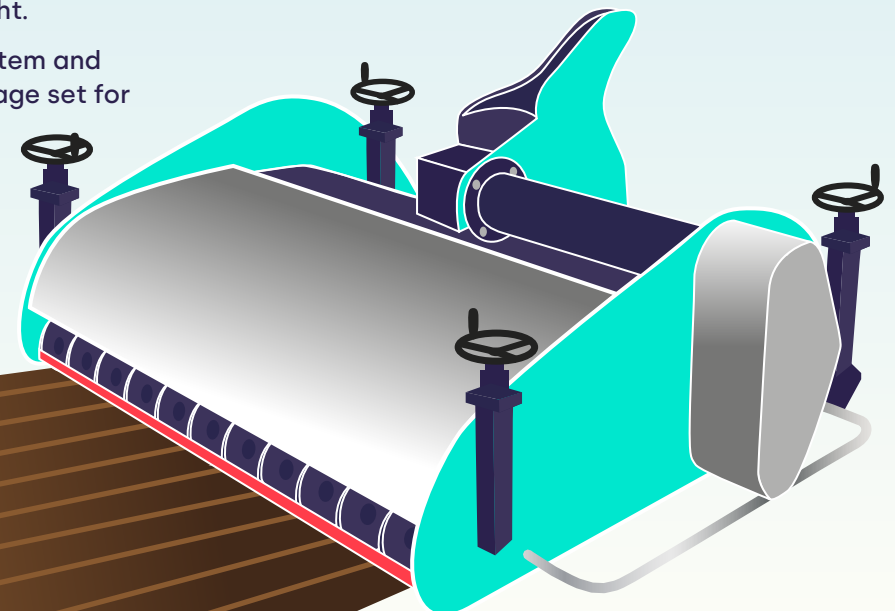
Only 5% of clubs have an irrigation system and with stricter controls around water usage set for the coming years, a trial using wetting agents is being set up at Chorley Panthers ARLFC. The wetting agents in the trial are designed to better utilise

water in the soil profile and to improve turf quality during the summer month whilst the season is in play without an irrigation system.

The trial will be run over a season and started on 25 April; results will be reported in year 2.

Future challenges

- COP 26.
- Increasing fuel prices.
- Discontinuation of new diesel vehicles.
- Water.
- Changes in practices.
- Regional differences.



CONCLUSION

Year 1 of the PAS consists of achievement of targeted milestones and benchmarking in preparation for the results in years 2 and 3. A grounds survey was carried out during March 2022, with results due to be published during June 2022. The GMA proposes repeating this survey each year with comparisons to be made from the data received to aid Workforce Development and Recruit, Retain, Reward as per the Phase 3 proposal.

The GMA's Grounds Management Framework (GMF) continues to be developed and is an integral part of PitchPower. Development will continue on areas that will allow individuals, clubs, and organisations to benchmark, identify areas of improvement and education required to provide solutions; and with continued promotion by NGBs in conjunction with the GMA will be a key factor in improving the playing surfaces within their sports and providing a clear pathway for future grounds professionals and volunteers.

Work continued with the Local Authority Risk Register to record current and historical maintenance practices for each sport and how that could affect the ability of grassroots sports to continue to be played, now and in the future. Trends begin to emerge with regards to engagement and maintenance of sports surfaces, which will give us invaluable information as we continue to work more closely with Local Authorities on both a local and national level across the PAS programme.

Technology, data collection and analysis are central to all PAS thinking and will continue to be crucial with regards to measuring results within Phase 3; being vital in assessing the impact and return on investment. Collating the relevant data for each sport will be essential in creating the plan for future phases of the programme and to ensure that GMA platforms, products and services continue to be updated and created, aligning with the programme needs to provide consistent and desirable training and membership benefits.

Areas for development include improved engagement with Local Authorities, implementation of recommendations following the results of the Workforce Development plan and Grounds Survey, to provide a clear pathway in conjunction with the GMA's GMF. The review and update of the Health and Safety aspect of grounds maintenance at grassroots level, will continue with a Health and Safety section being added to the GMA Toolkit. The six pillars of the GMA strategy will form part of a wide-ranging collaborative approach utilising GMA products and services that will provide sustainable support to any initiatives.

Environmental sustainability and innovation are essential within the volunteer sector and any future support programmes should include and encourage this. Achieving this will need targeted resources from the partners and stakeholders in areas such as Local Authorities, communication, educational and workforce development as agreed within the PAS proposal and funding requirements.

It is imperative that consideration be given to maintaining pitches to a 'Good' standard, beyond any revisits, along with a plan for ensuring that the industry/workforce can keep up with the level of funding being offered.

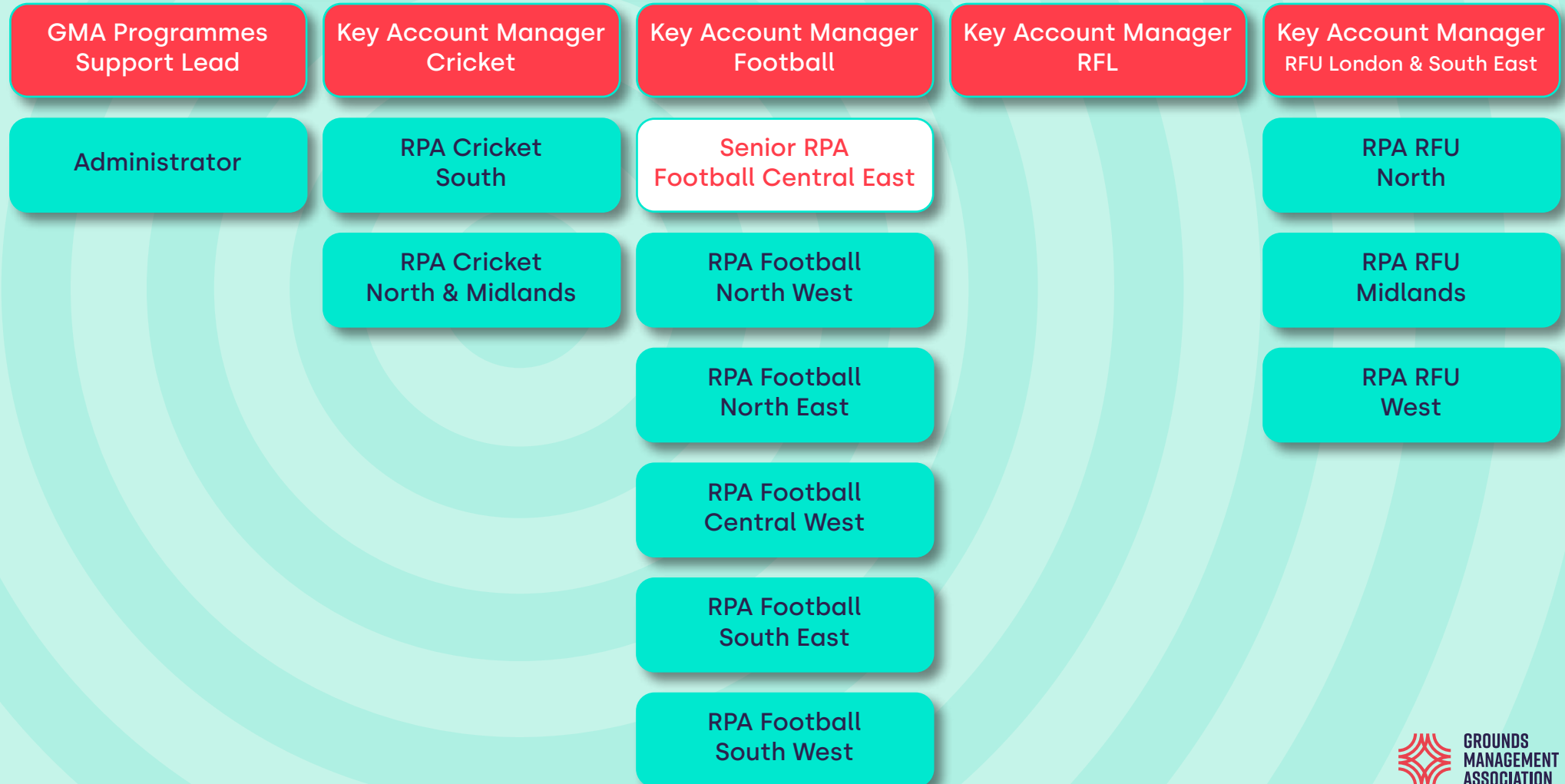
Recommended Key areas and development for the future

- Grounds Management Framework.
- Local Authorities.
- Workforce Development – Volunteer and Professional.
- PitchPower 2.0.
- Environmentally Sustainable practices and products.
- The government's ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles will come into effect from 2030 with the sale of hybrids being outlawed from 2035. Thereafter, those buying new vehicles will have a choice of either **battery-electric vehicles** or **vehicles fuelled by hydrogen**.

It is clear that the fundamentals of workforce development, funding, research, innovation, sustainability and up-skilling of volunteers will provide the platform for the NGBs to achieve their aims and objectives. The products and services, along with the technical expertise of the GMA will ensure that all these areas are met by collaboratively working with the NGBs and stakeholders. This though will require adequate resource and planning, and that those plans are over a realistic period of time.

APPENDIX 1 – PAS STRUCTURE

GMA Chief Operating Officer



APPENDIX 2 – GLOSSARY

Abbreviation	Description
CFA	County Football Association
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
FF	Football Foundation
GaNTIP	Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme
GMA	Grounds Management Association
GMF	Grounds Management Framework
KAM	Key Account Manager
LA	Local Authority
PAS	Pitch Advisory Service
PP	PitchPower
PQS	Performance Quality Standards
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFPM	Regional Facilities Planning Manager
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RPA	Regional Pitch Advisor
SE	Sport England
WFD	Workforce Development





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