

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



Aim of Grounds Management Framework

For every grass sport surface to achieve the best possible quality playing surface for its users.

Why it is important?

We know that grass playing surfaces managed on a regular basis can improve player experience, lead to a reduction in cancellations, and potentially increase year-round participation.

Striving for better quality playing surfaces that are maintained by qualified grounds staff and volunteers, will ensure that more sport can be played on higher quality and safer grounds.

What is Grounds Management Framework (GMF)?

A national framework for natural turf sport surfaces, so that those responsible for playing surfaces are aware of the playing surface characteristics, resources, skills, and knowledge required to meet their requirements.

GMF identifies what is required to achieve each level in terms of the standard of surface, grounds management expertise and resources. This includes:

- A set of standards to benchmark the quality of each surface, across all levels of sports from community to professional sport.
- A skills and knowledge matrix that recommends the core skills and competencies that volunteers and professional should demonstrate.
- Resource requirements such as budgets and time commitments.

Who is it intended for?

The framework can assist everyone involved in managing and maintaining sports grounds including Grounds staff, Ground Managers, Club Committees and Senior Management. It is aimed at all aspects of the industry including community clubs, local authorities, education and professional sports clubs.

Grounds staff and volunteers

- Broader professional skills
- Improved personal career development
- Increased pride and satisfaction of playing surfaces they produce
- Understanding of what makes a natural surfaces high quality, and how to enhance it further
- A method to measure and quantify improvements
- Better use of budgets
- A tool to communicate with management, or owners, to help them understand the needs and resources to maintain the facility

Facility operators, including education, local authorities, professional clubs and community clubs

- Better use of budgets
- Better return on investment
- Enhance understanding of grounds management
- Improved knowledge to communicate with grounds staff
- Improved knowledge to support grounds staff development
- More clarity on quality of playing surface required for level of sport played at site
- Reduced cancellation of matches
- Increased income
- Increased playing capacity
- Increase in player satisfaction
- Drive up playing surface quality standards

Players, coaches, and spectators

- Improved player satisfaction
- Increased pride and satisfaction of ground and facilities
- Better understanding of what makes a quality playing surface
- Fewer matches cancelled
- Improved playing surfaces
- Support technical development by playing on better playing surfaces
- Reduced injuries from poor surfaces

How to understand where your playing surface currently is on the framework?

Undertake a technical assessment of your playing surface to understand where you sit on the framework. This should be undertaken by a suitably qualified individual who is familiar with technical assessments. For more information on how to obtain a playing surface assessment please click [here](#).

Following an initial assessment, it is advisable for the Grounds Manager to undertake a series of self-assessments of the playing surface to ensure the standard is being maintained. Please click [here](#) for more information on self-assessment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why promote a framework for natural turf?

There is no statutory provision for natural playing surfaces, but a grounds management framework, based on existing performance quality standards, updated for today's market, will for the first time enable the industry to establish industry-wide benchmarks and appropriate standards of provision.

How has the framework been developed?

The GMA have consulted widely across the industry to develop the framework. This has included the following:

- Establishing a working group made up of experts across the industry to adapt and develop the technical data from the original Performance Quality Standards (PQS).
- Detailed discussions with National Governing Bodies, Sport England and industry experts.
- Industry wide consultation with contractors, Grounds Managers and suppliers.

What are the benefits of GMF?

Adopting the principles of GMF will provide benefits across any organisation including players, coaches and spectators. The variety of benefits provided from better quality playing surfaces include the following.

Is the Grounds Management Framework about the facility or the people?

The answer is both! Integral to this will be a grounds manager skills and knowledge framework to help to continually improve standards and the effective use of available resources.

How will the GMF improve understanding of career prospects?

The skills and knowledge framework will create an incremental and progressive pathway linking the grassroots volunteer to the professional. It provides a clear development pathway for those who want to progress a career in sports turf management.

How will you provide training and education across such a broad spectrum of facility?

Specific training and education modules will be developed to match the framework's skills and knowledge matrix and will be tailored to include the requirements of specific sports. These will be delivered both online and in traditional format.

How will the framework be updated to meet changes in the industry?

GMF will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains appropriate and up to date to meet the needs of the industry. This will include all aspects of the framework including the technical data, the skills and knowledge matrix and resources required to achieve each level.

The annual review will obtain feedback from a range of different users of the framework including facility operators, Grounds managers, grounds staff, NGBs, consultants and GMA staff.



What does this mean?

A playing surface that is safe for recreational sport and meets the minimum playing needs and expectations of community players nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	Grassroots Women's regional leagues
Cricket	Casual cricket and friendlies
Rugby Union	League Levels 9-12
Rugby League	Regional Leagues

The Playing Surface

The playing surface is of a quality that provides a safe environment for players. It provides an acceptable level of playability however the player experience will be limited as the quality of the surface and may restrict the range of skills possible. It is also likely to perform reasonably well during good weather however it is likely that the playing surface would deteriorate during extended periods of high intensity usage or inclement weather.

For more details about the playing surface standards please refer to the technical data here.

Benefits

- Provide a safe playing surface for users
- Low maintenance costs and time commitments

Limitations

- Player experience could be poor
- Playing surface could deteriorate quickly during periods of adverse weather conditions.
- Likely to have a relatively high number of cancellations.
- Only able to sustain a limited amount of play before surface becomes poor
- May impact on player retention and recruitment due to relatively poor player experience

The Grounds Manager

Grounds Manager, staff or volunteer should demonstrate the knowledge to safely prepare a playing surface and undertake basic maintenance operations. They would have the ability to undertake a basic visual assessment and repairs to the playing surface.

The Grounds Manager, staff or volunteer would have a clear understanding of the role and career pathway and an awareness of different sources of support available.

The Machinery

Having appropriate equipment and machinery that is well serviced and fit for purpose is essential to maintaining quality playing surfaces. The machinery list would be relatively small to maintain a playing surface to Basic standard and would also include a lot of hand tools.

For the infrequent operations it is often more cost effective to use contractors rather than cover the cost of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. Contractors can often provide expertise and experience that also provides added value compared to undertaking the works in house.

Resources

Limited resources (time and budget) are available for playing surface maintenance so this in turn limits the quality of playing surface that can be prepared. However small improvements in the resources and capabilities of the Grounds Manager can have a significant impact on the quality of playing surface that can be prepared.

Although it is important to have an individual who has overall responsibility for the maintenance of the playing surface, it is possible to have a team of people to assist with the maintenance to help share the load. This model works in both volunteer and professional settings.

Budgets are often tight when preparing playing surfaces to a Basic standard, so understanding the minimum requirements to maintain a playing surface to the Basic level is essential. At this level small changes in budget can have a significant impact on the quality of the playing surface. A decrease can dramatically reduce the quality of the playing surface, while conversely a small budget increase, in the hands of a knowledgeable grounds manager, can make a significant improvement to the quality of the playing surface.



Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas

- Prioritise the playing surface as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- Work with the Grounds Manager, coaches and players to prevent damage from overuse and poor weather conditions.
- Work with and invest in your Grounds Manager by supporting them to upskill and acquire more knowledge.
- Provide a ring-fenced budget for grounds maintenance.
- Invest in your ground to ensure that appropriate materials and tools are made available to maintain a safe playing surface.
- Promote and thank you Grounds Manager for the job that they do, as often they are hugely underappreciated.

Advice on how to progress to the next GMF level

- Understand your playing surface and what areas need to be improved to progress to the next level.
- Obtain a playing surface report to identify the areas of improvement.
- Invest in your grounds people to develop their knowledge and skills as this alone will have a significant impact on the quality of the playing surfaces.
- Invest in the right materials to allow your Grounds Manager to undertake appropriate repairs to your playing surface.
- Support your Grounds Manager to understand what he needs in terms of support and resources to prepare a playing surface to meet your ambitions.
- Prioritise the playing surface as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.



What does this mean

A playing surface that is good quality and safe for recreational sport. It meets the playing needs and expectations of community players nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	Grassroots Women's Regional Leagues
Cricket	Local and County Leagues
Rugby Union	League Level 7-9 with full Mini and Junior teams
Rugby League	National Conference Leagues

The Playing Surface

The playing surface is of a quality that provides a good experience for recreational players providing a surface that is reliable and consistent. The playing surface should be able to sustain a reasonably high level of activity without significant deterioration of the surface. It would have some resilience during periods of adverse weather however this capacity will still be limited so usage during these periods will need to be managed carefully.

For more details about the playing surface standards please refer to the technical data here.

Benefits

- Good player experience
- Provide a safe playing surface for users
- Relatively low maintenance costs and time commitments
- Reduced cancellation of matches compared to a basic level playing surface.
- Improved player retention and recruitment
- Improved carrying capacity of the playing surface

Limitations

- Playing surface could deteriorate during sustained periods of adverse weather
- Still likely to have cancellations during a season
- Needs careful management of usage to ensure surface quality doesn't deteriorate

The Grounds Manager

Grounds manager, staff or volunteer should demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of playing surface preparation techniques and maintenance operations. They would undertake repairs during and after the season to ensure the quality of the playing surface is retained but are likely to rely on external support for any specialist services.

Individuals can undertake a basic playing surface quality assessment, identify commonly occurring issues and have a good understanding of the Health and Safety Legislation.

The Grounds Manager should be competent and familiar with basic management skills and able to supervise others on a one-to-one basis.

The Machinery

Having appropriate equipment and machinery that is well serviced and fit for purpose is essential to maintaining playing surfaces to the desired standard. The machinery list would be relatively small to maintain a playing surface to Good standard and would also include a lot of hand tools.

For the infrequent operations it is often more cost effective to use contractors rather than cover the cost of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. Contractors can often provide expertise and experience that also provides added value compared to undertaking the works in house.

Resources

There are limited resources (time and budget) available for playing surface maintenance however small improvements in the resources and capabilities of the Grounds Manager can have a significant impact on the quality of playing surface that can be prepared.

Although it is important to have an individual who has overall responsibility for the maintenance of the playing surface, it is possible to have a team of people to assist with the maintenance to help share the load. This model works in both volunteer and professional settings.

Changes in budget can have a significant impact on the quality of the playing surface. A decrease can dramatically reduce the quality of the playing surface, while conversely an increase, in the hands of a knowledgeable groundsman, can make a significant improvement to the playing surface quality.



It is also important that the budget is used in areas that will have the biggest impact. Budget should be used carefully and not wasted on unnecessary items that will have minimal impact on the quality of the playing surface.

Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas

- Prioritise the playing surface as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- Invest in your Grounds Manager's knowledge and education in the form of training and other CPD activities.
- Understand if additional workforce may be required to support the Grounds Manager such as end of season working groups, use of sub-contractors for specialist work etc.
- Work with the Grounds Manager to prevent damage from overuse and poor weather conditions.
- Provide appropriate ring-fenced budget for materials, machinery and servicing to allow the Grounds Manager to do their job properly.
- Promote and thank you Grounds Manager for the job that they do, as often they are hugely underappreciated.

How to progress to the next level

- Understand your playing surface and what areas need to be improved to progress to the next level.
- Obtain a playing surface report to identify the technical areas of improvement.
- Invest in your Grounds Manager to develop their knowledge and skills as this alone will have a significant impact on the quality of the playing surfaces.
- Invest in the right materials and tools to allow your Grounds Manager to undertake appropriate repairs and improvements to your playing surface.
- Consider regular external contractor support to undertake specialist annual operations such as decompaction and end of season renovation.
- Support your Grounds Manager to understand what they need in terms of support and resources to prepare a playing surface to meet your ambitions.
- Understand budget requirements to maintain a playing surface at the Advanced level.

What does this mean

A playing surface that is high quality and meets the needs of top-level recreational sport. It meets the playing needs and expectations of both community and semi-professional players nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	Step 3 to 6 Women's Super League, Championship and National League
Cricket	Feeder Leagues to Premier Leagues
Rugby Union	Leagues Levels 3-6
Rugby League	National League 1

The Playing Surface

The playing surface provides a very good quality experience for all users and can host significant levels of activity. The quality of the surface would be very good and provide a consistent and reliable surface for users to demonstrate their skills.

It is likely that the playing surface would have a good functioning drainage and irrigation system which would make it resilient during periods of adverse weather. It should also be able to sustain periods of high intensity usage without significant deterioration of the surface.

For more details about the playing surface standards please refer to the technical data here.

Benefits

- Player experience is very good
- Good player retention and recruitment
- Sustain high levels of activity
- Reduced cancellation of matches compared to a good level playing surface.
- Playing surface is resilient to adverse weather conditions
- Support usage of more than one team such as reserves & women

Limitations

- Costs and time commitments are high
- Requires a highly skilled and experience Grounds Manager to manage the ground

The Grounds Manager

Grounds Manager, staff or volunteer should demonstrate a well-developed, rounded knowledge of grounds management and be highly skilled in all common playing surface preparation operations and techniques. This would be supported by formal training and/or qualifications that demonstrate both practical and theoretical knowledge of agronomy.

Individuals can produce and implement a full turf management programme, have detailed knowledge of Performance Quality Standards (PQS), understand how to use contractors effectively and be able to oversee health and safety management of the ground. Also, the Ground's Manager can supervise a team and undertake key management functions.

Although the Grounds Manager may not have the experience to undertake all remedial action they would know where to go for further advice.

The Machinery

Having appropriate equipment and machinery that is well serviced and fit for purpose is essential to maintaining playing surfaces to the desired standard. The machinery and tool requirements to maintaining a playing surface to the Advanced standard would be quite considerable to reflect the range of operations undertaken by the Grounds Manager.

Careful consideration would be required to understand whether purchasing or leasing a new piece of equipment is more cost effective than either hiring or using a contractor. For any infrequent operations it is often more cost effective to use contractors rather than cover the cost of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. Contractors can often provide expertise and experience that also provides added value compared to undertaking the works in house.

Resources

The Grounds Manager is supported with good resources from the management in terms of budget and support. The cost of time and money to prepare a playing surface compared to a good standard playing surface does increase significantly.

It is important to have an individual who has overall responsibility for the maintenance of the playing surface, however due to the amount of work required, they may need to be supported by a team. This could be in form of professionals and / or volunteers so that the workload can be shared.



ADVANCED

To be able to maintain a playing surface to an Advanced standard, having an appropriate budget to do so is essential. Providing an inadequate budget could make it very difficult to maintain a playing surface to this standard and potentially see the playing surface quality deteriorate.

It is important that any budget is set in consultation and agreement with the Grounds Manager so that all parties are clear of what is required and achievable. However, budget on its own will not prepare an Advanced level playing surface so ensuring the grounds managers has the right skills and knowledge is critical.

Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for maintaining the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas:

- Prioritise the playing surface as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- The Grounds Manager should be considered a management role that has direct input into the running of the club.
- The club would support the learning and education of the Grounds Manager to ensure up to date knowledge is retained.
- Have a clear strategy for use of subcontractors, machinery servicing and replacement.
- Develop a long-term vision for the ground so plans can be created to achieve desired outcomes.
- There is a clear and protected budget for playing surface maintenance which is the responsibility of the Grounds Manager.
- The Grounds Manager's role should be praised and appreciated for the essential and hard work that is put in place.
- Understand the limitations of the ground and be clear of the balance between playing surface quality and player / club expectations.

How to progress to the next level

- Understand your needs as a club and what benefits would be gained from developing a playing surface to the next standard.
- Undertake a value for money assessment as to the benefits vs costs of achieving the next GMF level.
- Liaise with the Grounds Manager to understand what investment is required to take the playing surface to the next level.
- Invest in your Grounds Manager to develop their knowledge and skills.
- Consider recruitment of additional grounds people to provide additional support and resources.
- Ensure the available budget is sufficient to meet additional work, materials and machinery to achieve and sustain the next standard.
- Ensure ongoing management support and effective working relationship with the Grounds Manager is integral to the operations of the organisation.



What does this mean

The playing surface is of a very high quality that meets the needs of professional and semi-professional sport in the UK. It meets the playing needs and expectations of professional and semi-professional athletes nationwide.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	National League Women's Super League and Championship
Cricket	National Counties and Premier Leagues
Rugby Union	Championship
Rugby League	Championship

The Playing Surface

The playing surface provides an excellent experience for users and is resilient to adverse weather conditions. It will be able to host significant levels of activity and be able to meet the needs and demands of professional athletes.

It also needs to be able to provide a high-quality surface throughout the playing season with the aim of improving player performance and spectator enjoyment.

For more details about the playing surface standards please refer to the technical data here.

Benefits

- Player experience is excellent
- Allow players to maximise their potential and demonstrate their skills
- Better quality of play and spectator experience.
- Sustain high levels of activity throughout the year
- Playing surface is resilient to adverse weather conditions

Limitations

- Costs and time commitments are high
- Requires a highly skilled and experience Grounds Manager to manage the ground
- Likely to be standalone single sport playing surface

The Grounds Manager

The Grounds manager, staff or volunteer and at least one member of staff should demonstrate a very detailed knowledge of grounds management and be highly skilled in all areas of playing surface preparation, agronomy, industry best practice and innovation. They would have formal qualifications which demonstrate both practical and theoretical knowledge of agronomy and the environmental impact of sports playing surfaces.

They would have a detailed understanding of sports turf agronomy, contract management and health and safety management as well as how to apply to it in practice.

The Grounds Manager would be able to manage a team of staff and provide leadership in the management of the ground. They would have responsibility for all playing surfaces, including practice grounds.

The Machinery

The machinery and tool requirements to maintain a playing surface to the High standard would be extensive and need to reflect the wide range of operations undertaken by the Grounds Manager. The range of equipment required would depend on the structure of the playing surface subbase, local conditions, and a range of other factors.

There may still be circumstances when the use of contractors may be a cost-effective approach instead of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. This needs careful consideration on a case-by-case basis to ensure budget control and ensure the works are completed in a timely manner.

Resources

The Grounds Manager is provided with very good resources from the management in terms of budget and support. The cost of time and money to prepare a playing surface to this standard is significant and should only be considered if the organisation's business plan can justify it.

The Grounds Manager will need to be supported by a skilled and knowledgeable team that can undertake both regular maintenance and match day activities. This team could be extensive depending on the number of playing surfaces that need to be maintained. This support may also include specialist work completed by contractors.

To be able to maintain a playing surface to a High standard requires a very substantial budget to cover both day-to-day maintenance and regular major



HIGH

works required throughout the season. When agreeing the budget for the playing surface maintenance it is essential to understand the performance requirements of the playing surface, in terms of player performance and in line with competition regulations.

It is important that any budget is set in consultation and agreement with the Grounds Manager so that all parties are clear of what is required and achievable.

Management Support

Support from the organisation responsible for maintaining the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas

- Continue to prioritise the playing surface as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- The Grounds Manager should be considered a management role that has direct input into the running of the club / organisation.
- The club would support the learning and education of the whole grounds management team to ensure up to date knowledge is retained.
- Have a clear strategy for use of subcontractors, machinery servicing and replacement.
- Have a long-term vision for the ground so plans can be created to achieve desired outcomes.
- There is a clear and protected budget for playing surface maintenance which is the responsibility of the Grounds Manager.
- The Grounds Manager's role should be praised and appreciated for the essential and hard work that is put in place, including raising the profile among fans, coaches and players.
- There should be a clear and good working relationship, understanding and appreciation between Grounds Manager, team management and coaching team to deliver to a common goal.



**GROUNDS
MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION**

How to progress to the next level

- Understand your needs as a club and what benefits would be gained from developing a playing surface to the next standard.
- Undertake a value for money assessment as to the benefits vs costs of achieving the next GMF level.
- Understand the playing surface quality requirements to match the ambitions of the club.
- Understand the level of investment required to achieve the next level. This includes both capital and revenue budget increase.
- Invest in your grounds management team to ensure there is enough resource to manage a ground to that level.
- Invest in the training and education of the grounds team so all staff are developing their knowledge and skills.
- Ensure the available budget is sufficient to meet additional work, materials and machinery to achieve and sustain the next standard.
- Ensure ongoing management support and effective working relationship with the Grounds Manager is integral to the operations of the organisation.



What does this mean

A playing surface that is of outstanding quality and meets the standards of play for elite sport in the UK. It meets the playing needs and expectations of professional athletes, both nationwide and globally.

Sport	Appropriate surface for:
Football	International, Premier League and Championship Women' Super League and International
Cricket	International and First-Class Counties
Rugby Union	International and Premiership
Rugby League	International and Super League

The Playing Surface

The playing surface meets all the needs of professional sport and provides a top-class playing surface for players to demonstrate their skills. It is virtually fully resilient to all adverse weather conditions and can host very large levels of activity throughout the year.

At the heart of these playing surfaces are maximising player performance and increasing spectator enjoyment.

Benefits

- Exceptional player experience
- Allow players to maximise their potential and demonstrate their skills
- Top quality standard of play and spectator experience
- Sustain very high levels of activity throughout the year
- Playing surface is almost entirely resilient to adverse weather conditions

Limitations

- Very high costs and time
- Requires a highly skilled and experience Grounds Manager to manage the ground
- Requires a significant number of staff and machinery

The Grounds Manager

Grounds manager, staff or volunteer and at least one member of staff should demonstrate extensive professional qualifications (recommended foundation degree level), with a commitment to having the latest knowledge of industry-leading techniques. They would have very detailed knowledge of sports turf agronomy, playing surface construction, implementation of a health and safety culture and innovations across the industry.

The Grounds Manager is part of the organisation's senior management team providing leadership to the ground management department. They will be a proven leader and able to manage large complex teams and have full management responsibility for all aspects of the ground and training facilities. Individuals would need to demonstrate competence and extensive experience of project and contract management.

For more detailed information about what is required to maintain a playing surface to this standard please refer to the full GMF Skills and Knowledge Matrix.

(INSERT LINK)

The Machinery

The machinery and tool requirements to maintaining a playing surface to an Elite standard would be very extensive and need to reflect the wide range of operations undertaken by the Grounds Manager.

The range of equipment would need to reflect the structure of the playing surface subbase, local conditions and a range of other factors.

There may still be circumstances when the use of contractors may be a cost-effective approach instead of purchasing and servicing machinery that is rarely used. This needs careful consideration on a case-by-case basis.

Resources

The Grounds Manager is provided with all required resources from the management in terms of budget and support. The cost of time and money to prepare a playing surface to this standard is very significant and so the business plan should be adjusted account for this.

The Grounds Manager will need to be supported by a skilled and knowledgeable team that can undertake both regular maintenance and match day activities. This team



ELITE

could be extensive depending on the number of playing surfaces that need to be maintained. This support may also include specialist work completed by contractors.

To be able to maintain a playing surface to an Elite standard requires a very substantial budget to cover both day-to-day maintenance and regular major works required throughout the season. When agreeing the budget for the playing surface maintenance it is essential to understand the performance requirements of the playing surface, in terms of player performance and in line with competition regulations.

It is important that any budget is set in consultation and agreement with the Grounds Manager so that all parties are clear of what is required to achieve the Elite standard.

Management support

Support from the organisation responsible for the ground is essential. This support should cover the following areas:

- Continue to prioritise the playing surface as an asset that has an impact on players, spectators, coaches and income.
- The Grounds Manager should be an active part of the senior management team.
- The club would support the learning and education of the whole grounds management team to ensure up to date knowledge is retained.
- The Ground's Manager would have knowledge of new and emerging industry innovations and technologies.
- Have a strategy for use of subcontractors, machinery servicing and replacement.
- Have a long-term vision for the ground so plans can be created to achieve desired outcomes that is fully supported by the club / organisation.
- There is a clear and protected budget for playing surface maintenance which is the responsibility of the ground manager.
- The Grounds Manager's role should be praised and appreciated for the essential and hard work that is put in place, including raising the profile among fans, coaches and players.
- There should be a clear and good working relationship, understanding and appreciation between Grounds Manager, team management and coaching team to deliver to a common goal.