

Briefing Note

East Road Playing Fields

2 minute read

1.0 Background

1.1 The parish council has received complaints from people using the tennis courts at the Sports Association grounds. Their concern is that people using the field for football and other games are directing their shots at the goalpost located close to the tennis court resulting in footballs coming into the court, disrupting their tennis game and occasionally making contact with the players. These complaints have remained unresolved for at least 18 months.

1.2 Informal attempts to engage with the football players and persuade them to either move their game or direct their strikes more carefully have not been successful. In August 2024, the Chair of Menheniot Sports Association asked for a meeting with the Parish Council to agree a solution that would enable people using the field for football and other purposes to do so without affecting people using the adjacent facilities.

2.0 Current situation

2.1 At the meeting, the MSA reported that some court users felt that not all incursions into the tennis court were accidental. Of those that were accidental, players were frequently apologetic and either moved their playing area or adjusted their game. The remaining incidents were repeated and attempts to intervene with the perpetrators did not have a positive outcome.

2.2 In addition to these incidents, the MSA's own CCTV had recorded people entering the tennis court through a gap in their fence to retrieve footballs. These were acts of trespass and have resulted in some damage to the fenced area.

3.0 Preferred outcomes

- 3.1 People attending the meeting agreed that their chosen outcome would be:
- For all users of the fields and tennis courts to be able to use their space safely and without disturbance.
 - That any solution is self-policing (that is, does not require personal interventions).
 - Consultation with field users and others essential before any final decision taken.

4.0 The Options

4.1 For discussion and agreement with councillors at the public meeting.

Item	Proposal	Notes
1	All field users to be made aware of the need for safety and personal responsibility.	<p>Personal interventions with football players <i>Already made but have not been successful or sustainable.</i></p> <p>Post warning signs <i>These would be advisory and unenforceable</i></p>

2	Raise height of fence that adjoins playing field (to deflect balls that might fall into the MUGA)	Possible – but does not address the cause of the disturbance <i>Who will pay for the extra fencing?</i> <i>Would the extra height of the fencing act more as a new challenge?</i>
	Remove the goalpost closest to the MUGA but leave the second post in position	Permanent removal is possible (MPC would fund ¹) <i>How will this impact on responsible field users who do not cause disturbances?</i> <i>Will the remaining post attract similar problems with footballs being targeted towards the parish hall and children's play area?</i>
3	Remove both goalposts	<i>How will this impact on responsible field users who do not cause disturbances?</i>
4	Remove both goalposts and replace with differently aligned junior posts	Possible – but new, smaller goalposts would need to be purchased (MPC would fund) <i>Are these fixed or temporary?</i> <i>If temporary, who takes responsibility for storage and manage their use?</i> <i>Will this interfere with other people using the playing fields?</i> (note: permanent nets can be harmful to hedgehogs) This would prevent use of the field by adult football teams <i>Does this matter? (rarely used for organised adult games)</i> <i>Is there scope for developing junior football with a new configuration?</i>

5.0 Next steps

5.1 This item will be included on the agenda for the public meeting scheduled for 21 November 2024. Chair has asked that a small working group of interested councillors meet to manage this piece of work (and the remit may be later extended to include future developments of the playing field)

5.2 Councillors will be asked to discuss the options and agree which (if any) to take forward.

5.3 Full consultation with field users and the wider community if councillors support the need for change.

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¹ Subject to councillors agreement