



Press Release

Saturday 2 October 2021

LTA hails Government's transformational investment into public park tennis courts for local communities

- Government's investment of £22million with LTA's committed spend of £8.5million will transform public courts across Britain
- Announcement will see thousands of public park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition brought back to life for the benefit of their local community
- 1.7m adults play tennis in parks each year, including more women than in club venues
- Currently across England, Scotland and Wales 45% of park courts are in poor, very poor or unplayable condition
 - Half of unplayable venues are in the most socially deprived areas of the country.
- New investment will pay for refurbishment and sustainable operating models in park courts, with specialist programmes and support to ensure courts are affordable and utilised

The LTA has today hailed the Government's investment of £22million into public tennis courts across Britain as transformational for the sport.

The move, together with an investment from the LTA of £8.5m, will see thousands of public park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition brought back to life for the benefit of their local community.

Park tennis court facilities are owned by local authorities and are vital community assets that can help widen the impact of the physical and mental health benefits that being active through tennis can bring.

Sustaining and increasing participation in tennis on park courts is also key to the long term health of the sport itself and the LTA's vision of opening tennis up to more people. The LTA believes tennis should be relevant, accessible, welcoming, and enjoyable to anyone, and park facilities are one of the most important ways to deliver this. On the back of Great Britain's success at the US Open, with Emma Raducanu, Joe Salisbury, Gordon Reid and Alfie Hewett bringing home titles,

this presents a unique opportunity to capitalise on the public interest in tennis and build on the legacy of the Murray family and others over recent years.

There are currently 1.7million adults and many more children who play tennis in a local park every year, and park tennis courts are particularly important in providing affordable, engaging and accessible opportunities for more female players and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as being the most popular venue for women to play after they have left education.

Whilst the popularity of the sport is flourishing, with yearly tennis participation growing 8% last year despite the long periods of lockdown, there are many areas of the country where park courts remain dilapidated and unappealing. Currently across England, Wales and Scotland around 45% of park courts are categorised as being in poor, very poor or unplayable condition, preventing many from picking up a racket and getting active. Critically, half of unplayable venues are in the most socially deprived areas of the country.

The LTA's ambition is to drive participation across park tennis sites, as well as ensuring the future sustainability of these facilities. As well as paying for the refurbishment of public park courts, the new investment will also pay for the implementation of sustainable operating models for the facilities, with specialist programmes and support to ensure courts are both affordable and utilised.

Following refurbishment, the LTA will work with local authorities across Britain to help support them with a variety of operating models to help increase participation. This includes making it easier for people to find and book a court through the LTA's online booking platform, LTA Rally, combined with digital gate access technology so people can turn up knowing a court is available for them to use, as well as community coaching programmes. This also provides opportunities to generate sinking funds so local authorities can continue to invest in facilities over the long term and ensure they are available for future generations. The LTA and its partners will work with local authorities to ensure provision can be as accessible as possible.

This approach has already been rolled out successfully for the past three years, including in cities such as Manchester and Sheffield and has demonstrated that with the right combination of programmes and coaching activity, participation in parks can increase significantly.

The LTA's £8.5m grant funding comes via the LTA Trust, the LTA's charity for investment in tennis infrastructure, of whom the LTA is the sole funder.

Scott Lloyd, Chief Executive of the LTA, said:

“This programme will be transformational for public tennis facilities in Britain. Alongside the money that the LTA is putting in this additional Government investment will allow us to repair and refurbish dilapidated park courts across the country. We are also committed to ensuring that any investment is supported by sustainable community tennis programmes, so courts see a real growth in usage and local authorities can continue to invest in their courts over the long term.”

Above and beyond the £8.5m grant funding for park courts, the LTA continues to invest in tennis programmes and facilities across the country, providing individual loan funding for many venues across the country. The LTA also remains committed to working with national and local government to support and significantly grow the network of public indoor tennis venues across Britain to compliment the 54 community indoor tennis centres currently operating.

- ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS

For LTA media enquiries please contact:

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Further details of LTA cost-free off to support Local Authorities detailed below:

- **LTA Rally**

Central to the plans has been the development of LTA Rally, a new digital platform to help people search for tennis activities in their area and make it easier for people to book a court. The platform was launched in 2020.

Acting as an aggregator, LTA Rally collects all booking and coaching information via partner venues booking pages and displays it for participants in one easy-to-view page, helping to remove what insight has shown to be a major barrier to increased participation in the sport in parks.

- **Gate Access Systems**

LTA Rally has also been developed to work hand-in-hand with gate access systems, where participants receive a code when a booking is made to access courts and get active through tennis. These systems are being offered to local authorities for parks on a fully funded basis

- **Local Tennis Leagues**

Last year the LTA has also acquired ‘Local Tennis Leagues’, which offers friendly, competitive tennis for thousands of adults. The acquisition comes with a plan to scale the delivery of the leagues to more park sites across the county, and an exciting opportunity to create mass participation in grass roots tennis competitive tennis as part of regular, community focussed events in a friendly environment. Local, fun and social competitive opportunities, like those provided by Local Tennis Leagues, have been shown to be a great way to encourage people to play more regularly – we aspire for this to be the first step in creating the tennis equivalent to parkrun.

- **Other Tennis Products and Programmes**

The acquisition of Local Tennis Leagues and the partnership with Tennis for Free enables the LTA to include them as part of a range of products and programmed activity to be run at park sites. These include LTA Youth, the LTA’s innovative and industry leading new junior programme, and LTA Big Tennis Weekends to help tennis venues attract the local community to come and try the sport at fun and welcoming open days.

- **Park Operating Models**

Different parks or clusters of parks need different operating models to be successful, and so the LTA have developed a flexible set of best practice models based on experiences of a range of successful and sustainable park sites across Britain.

Whether a local authority owns and operates a park venue or cluster of venues themselves, through a leisure trust or not-for-profit partner, or courts are operated by local community groups, an applicable operating model has been developed. Through its regional team, the LTA is also able to support with the recruitment, training and retention of the right tennis workforce.

ABOUT THE LTA

The LTA is the National Governing Body of tennis in Great Britain. We are here to govern and grow tennis, from grassroots participation through to the professional game. Our vision is “Tennis Opened Up” and we’re on a mission to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. We work with schools, with volunteers, with coaches and with venues across the whole country. We also represent the interests of over 685,000 Members, men and women, girls and boys, playing on more than 23,000 courts. The LTA runs and supports a network of 11,500 approved tournaments for players of all ages, the four corner-stones of which are the premier grass-court events leading up to The Championships, Wimbledon: the Viking Open Nottingham, the Viking Classic Birmingham, the cinch Championships (at The Queen’s Club, London) and the Viking International Eastbourne. For further information about the LTA and tennis in Britain, visit www.lta.org.uk or follow us on Twitter @the_LTA