



BOWDON
LAWN TENNIS CLUB

EGM TO APPROVE THE RESURFACING OF THE LAST 4 REMAINING GRASS COURTS

Membership Questions & Answers

October 2020

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Purpose of document

For many members of BLTC, this will be their first experience of an EGM.

The committee is elected by the membership to run the club on a day to day basis, however on the rare occasion they occur, significant changes are voted for by the membership using the EGM process.

The committee are tasked with identifying, researching and planning for opportunities that are in the best long-term interests and security of the club. The committee only make their recommendations and prepare for an EGM, as it is the members who have the final decision, for or against any motion, by a simple majority vote.

The purpose of this document, is to address all the various members questions and concerns. The questions we have received from the membership via emails, WhatsApp or in person, are in black and the committee's response is in red.

Introduction

1. Why replace the grass courts?

The objectives of the Club include...“encourage and facilitate the playing of The Game” and to “promote, improve, develop and support the interests of The Game”. The current membership needs year-round playing facilities.

To increase the capacity for more consistent and predictable play all year round, whilst reducing operating costs and enabling improved maintenance of the Club's other facilities. We estimate that the proposed changes will increase court availability by 40%.

The membership's demand for all year round social, team, coach lead and general membership tennis has significantly increased. Reconstruction of courts 1 to 4 in an all-weather surface will support this increased demand AND provide for up to 5 mini junior courts to optimise court usage.

2. When will this happen?

Subject to the approval of the membership at the EGM and the other necessary planning and financial approvals, it is estimated that construction work may start early in 2021 and complete before May 2021.

Planning and infrastructure

1. Are you getting these new courts floodlit as well?

An application for floodlights to courts 11, 12 and 13 is in progress and when installed in September 2021 we will have 9 courts floodlit with low energy LED flood lighting. That will be enough floodlit courts for our membership in the autumn and winter months when the demand is lower than summer months.

2. Why are you going for an acrylic surface and not the artificial clay again that is so popular?

Whilst the artificial clay has been a great success, the nature of play is different from other “hard” surfaces; we believe that the installation of a porous acrylic surface will provide the membership with the best practical playing options.

We want to remain a 3-court surface Club. We know of no other Club that would have artificial clay (x6), tiger turf (x3) and acrylic (x4). We will be unique in Cheshire.

Acrylic surface is a hard surface and is not good on the knees?

The surface is cushioned and is a mat that is prefabricated to a uniform thickness that will allow a true ball bounce on all areas of the court. It is also gentle on the joints!

3. What colour will the new surface be?

There is a standard range of colours. To aid the planning application process, we are going for a two-tone green surface with the inner court itself being a slightly darker green and outside the court lines being a lighter green. These two tones will help with line calls.

4. Acrylic surfaces have puddles form on them and are unplayable in the rain?

The court surface is called Poraflex and is porous. The Poraflex surface is extremely useful in rainy climates where traditional impervious acrylic courts will retain water on the surface and make play impractical during times of wet weather. As Poraflex is free draining, there is no water retention therefore the court use throughout the year will greatly increase. It is fitted to the outside courts of many David Lloyd centres across the UK. We have inspected an installed surface and spoken to Clubs and coaches and feel this is the best 3rd surface for BLTC.

5. What are they like after a night of frost in the winter months?

As well as being extremely durable and resistant to wear and the elements, the cushioning effect will remain constant throughout seasonal temperature variations and over many years of use. However, an extreme frost will make most outdoor surfaces unplayable.

6. It is a fast surface and not suited to the type of tennis most members play at Bowdon?

It has a pace rating of 3 out of 5. The ITF classifies surfaces into one of five categories according to its court pace. They are:

Rating:

- 1 - Slow
- 2 - Medium-slow
- 3 - Medium
- 4 - Medium-fast
- 5 - Fast

The new courts will have same pace rating as the artificial clay courts.

7. Are you going to speak to the neighbours before applying for planning permission?

An open evening may be held, however, due to the time pressures, the necessary planning applications needed to be submitted very promptly to support construction and completion by late Spring 2021 if the motion is passed.

8. How often (on average) do you need to respray the top coating acrylic surface.

With heavy club use, we are advised that the surface will need to be resprayed around every 5 years. The spraying process takes around 2 days to prepare and apply the new surface and then it takes a few more days to completely dry. We estimate the courts would be out of use for 7 days once every 5 years to be resprayed.

9. Does further respraying of the top surface have an impact on the drainage of the courts.

We are advised that the porosity will only begin to be affected after more than five resprays. Even then it will still drain but not as quick. Therefore, it could be 25 years before the drainage of the new courts begins to slow.

10. What is the monthly/seasonal maintenance of a poraflex porous acrylic tennis court?

The contractor will provide a detailed surface maintenance program that includes surface cleaning of leaves, pine needles, dust and dirt from the surface using a wide broom, (medium to soft bristles) or a garden vacuum cleaner. If the latter is used, it should be well maintained and carefully operated to avoid contamination or physical damage to the surface.

At least twice a year, the surface should be thoroughly washed using cold water from a hose pipe and a soft-bristled broom.

11. Court 1 and court 2 will be repositioned under the large trees hanging over from the neighbours of the tennis club. How can you remove tree sap and bird droppings for the surface that will undoubtedly fall onto courts 1 and court 2

You can use either a pressure washer and not hold the lance too close for too long as the paint may come off, or use a light brush with warm water and brush off the tree sap and bird droppings.

12. What is the approximate % level of certainty that planning permission will be granted?

Given that the first planning application to remove the grass to what is now courts 5-8 was the easiest of all the ones made so far, we are not expecting a great deal of objection to it and feel we will get it, so 75% plus. How long it takes and how difficult the planners are in asking for more detail, tree surveys for instance and agreeing the storage facility we will soon find out.

13. You have answered a question on floodlights there is no plan to add lights to these courts but surely, we should be specifically excluding any future application for that (both to strengthen the application and to reassure local residents) because the practice of planning creep is common place and has been used by the club in the past.

Whatever commitments made would not stop any future committee and club seeking to change what might be promised today.

14. How are you going to access the grass courts with the plant and equipment needed to resurface the grass courts?

AGGS is shortly to start the construction of the indoor sports centre on the land next to the grass courts number 3 and 4.

We intend to agree access to the grass courts down the road, Green Courts to the entrance to AGGS car park and across to the right to the rear of the grass courts. This access will void the use of Elcho Road and greatly assist our neighbours. Without this access, there will be trucks and lorries up and down the Elcho Road, 8 hours a day

15. It appears that the main power incomer and distribution board is to be moved (or will have to be removed and then redone after rebuilding of the materials store. Has this been budgeted?

The existing sheds are to be demolished and a new storage and utility room constructed within the low retaining wall, this has been budgeted for and will house the electrical mains boards.

16. Is sufficient space being planned for a tractor and its various sweeping attachments plus the other ground's maintenance tools and spare nets?

The new equipment storage and utility rooms will provide for the required equipment and storage.

17. What type of fencing will be around the rear and sides of the new courts and what type of fencing will be adjacent to Coribb Stables to look at?

Any new fencing required to the Club boundary will be of a type similar to that surrounding the perimeter of Clay Courts 5, 6, 7 & 8. It will be 3.6m above court level, with a chain link mesh.

The courts nearest to Coribb Stables will be a mini red tennis courts and it would be side on. This is not like the end of a full tennis courts with powerful tennis balls coming down and hitting a back fence. It is likely we will opt for a full 3.6m chain link fence adjacent to Corrib Stable in keeping with the existing fencing. We will leave a 1m gap between the tennis court fence and the boundary to Corrib Stable. This will allow access for the maintenance to the hedges of Corrib Stable.

18. Will the new acrylic courts require a low fence in front of the club house?

No. The low-level fence the courts 5 and 7 is necessary only as a Health and Safety precaution. Members had been tripping over the small lip that is needed to keep the artificial clay granules on the court. No such lip is needed for the new acrylic courts and so the court surface will be installed flush up to the club house. The new courts will not need to have a low fence in front of the clubhouse and so we can maintain the open access from the clubhouse onto court 1 and vice versa. We are aware that this is very important to many members. Provision will be made to retrofit a low-level fence in the event that it becomes necessary.

19. What type of fencing will be in between the two courts 1 and 2 and courts 3 and 4. Will it be similar to the soft fencing that we currently have for the grass courts?

A lightweight movable netting to divide courts 1 & 2 from 3 & 4 similar in character to that used to separate courts 5 & 6 from 7 & 8 will be used.

20. Could we not just see how things go with getting the top courts lit first?

The remaining grassed areas represent a huge under used asset of the club. By resurfacing them, we are turning them into an asset that all the members can use and enjoy 52 weeks per year and not just 10 weeks per year as grass courts.

21. Is there planning permission to light the top courts? Instead of converting the grass courts we could use club funds to bring forward the installation of lights to courts 11-13. This would extend the playing hours of existing facilities that have already been resurfaced without further borrowing.

We have not got planning permission to install lights on courts 11 - 13.

This is not expected to come through until quarter 1 or quarter 2 of 2021. We have already factored in the purchase and installation of the lights on court 11 - 13 in September 2021 as we will not need them until October 2021.

Daytime court pressures also existing at weekends and can only be addressed by ensuring that courts 1, 2, 3 & 4 are playable in all conditions and that we have more mini courts available

22. Please provide a date for the decision on the installation of floodlights from Trafford Council on courts 11-13 - it's an awful long time to wait another year for them to be in place. Why such a delay? Can you

guarantee that floodlights will be permitted? If you don't get approval, we could potentially then have -7 all-weather courts with no floodlights and have taken on a substantial amount of debt for this?

We have not currently got planning permission to install lights on courts 11-13 and it is not expected to come through until quarter 1 / 2 of 2021.

We have already factored in the purchase and installation of the lights on court 11-13 in September 2021 as we will not need them until October 2021. However, we cannot guarantee planning permission will be granted.

23. When are you going to do the car park.... It's a mess? The car park is in an appalling condition and is in need of urgent attention. Despite assurances to Members over the last few years that it would be repaired nothing has been done and now it has been put back until the end of 2021.

We have had to wait for the repairs to the leaning wall to be completed which have only very recently happened. The committee are focusing on the investment in the playing facilities at the Club.

New members join BLTC for the new courts and social aspect and not the car park. However, we do recognise the car park is in a poor condition. It is not just a matter of covering it with tarmac. The car park needs land drains for the surface rain water and we are hoping to complete the drainage and the resurfacing of the car park in late 2021 from existing cash flow. We are also exploring the installation of a small number of electric vehicle charging points to the long term future. We budget the cost of the car park work is around £45,000 and planning applications for the car park improvements will be made during this winter.

24. The surface of the new courts is said to be wheelchair friendly – does the plan include provision for wheelchair members, coaching and matches?

The plan is to encourage wheelchair members by introducing a wheelchair membership package for the 2021/22 membership year. Our Head of Tennis Phil Spencer, has also completed a wheelchair coaching course to deliver specific coaching for wheelchair members.

25. Service access to the clubhouse is limited – all items must be ferried by trolley across grass and down steep slopes. Does the plan improve this access at all?

The gate at Elcho Road will still provide full access to the club. In terms of ease of access, unfortunately the club house is in the centre of the club, however the new court surface will make it easy to move supplies to and from the club house.

26. You mention that the Girls Grammar school intended to start work on their new gymnasium soon. I was quite alarmed by that, as the planning application (98934/FUL/19) has not been approved – and is unlikely to be so until the school's parking issues have been adequately addressed.

We have listened in to the planning committee meeting on this and it was approved but the Trafford website has not been updated. In the event that it is delayed it will only improve our chance of negotiating construction access through AGGS.

27. Are there any plans to cover any of the courts?

As a constructive suggestion taking into account that if it's raining - which it does a lot here - neither the grass, Astro, clay or proposed new surface are playable. If there is funding available would it not be better to look at options for the construction of a Bubble/Bubbles

We have considered a bubble on courts 5, 6, 7 and 8 in the past but have not developed it any further as it requires similar application to a full structure.

The girls' school have taken 12 months for planning and had filed 138 separate documents with Trafford Planning. 26 neighbours have made representations to the planning officer for the school to answer to.

Once we decided not to go for a bubble, we installed the new floodlights. Therefore, the new floodlights would have to be reduced in height or repositioned as they currently would not fit inside a bubble structure. Also, with a bubble we would have to install drainage around the courts to remove all the surface rain water that would collect at the ends of the courts. The current drainage would not cope with such levels of water onto a small concentrated area.

It is likely that a large white bubble in the middle of a conservation area would never get off the ground with neighbours or the Planning officer. There are also lots of problems with bubble structures (or air domes). David Lloyd's in Cheadle and Manchester are often blown over and require reassembly. They are costly to maintain and repair and also costly to erect, demolish and store off site every autumn and spring.

We are focusing on lighting courts 11 - 13, the grass courts, completing the patio and steps works and completing the car park in the next few years.

All weather courts are playable in the rain. It is the heaviness of the rain that dictates play. All weather courts can drain and be playable within 20 minutes but grass can take days before it is suitable for play. If in this period it rains again, it delays further the court availability.

28. It is environmentally friendly? Has the Committee considered the environmental impact of removing all of the grass and has an independent environmental impact assessment been carried out? It is well-documented that the loss of grass and green spaces in towns and cities poses a threat to the environment.

The materials used in these surfaces are environmentally friendly, using recycled rubber for the cushioning mat, together with solvent free adhesives and a water-based polymer coating

David Kirkman, an architect with the club advises on such matters. He confirmed it was not a requirement of the planning application for the previous removal of grass courts but we will look into it to ascertain if one will be needed for the new planning application. .

29. Has the Committee consulted with local Heritage groups and Conservation groups with regards to their opinion on the removal of the grass courts? What is the LTA's view on our specific grass courts and the motion to resurface them? Please provide evidence. If these groups have not been consulted, may I ask why not? Please confirm if this will be done before any decisions are taken?

When the planning application to replace the grass with clay in 2016 (Courts 5-8) the local conservation groups were all consulted by Trafford Planners. No comments were received. On that basis we do not see a repeat application requiring such consultation. The LTA are supporting our refurbishment of the courts with up to a £200,000, 10 year interest free loan.

30. What is the hurry?

When did the Committee decide that they wanted to do this work at the same time as AGGS? It appears that discussions and decisions have taken place and been made, with no communication between the Committee and Members - a less than transparent process. Members should have been given the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions at an earlier stage in the process and the opaque nature of the process so far has only offered a limited window of opportunity for members to be exposed to the direction the Committee wants to take the club in - a system that many would regard as wholly unacceptable. Do we need or have planning permission to replace the courts and when was this submitted?

The committee is elected by the members to run the club on a day to day basis and the conversion of the grass courts is just one of many areas or issues they are dealing with.

Planning permission is required to replace the grass with any artificial surface. The committee has regular contact with The Grammar for a number of reasons and became aware of the AGSG application for a new gymnasium facility towards the end of 2019.

There was no hurry, only a decision that it was best practice to account for this. Therefore, we decided to prepare and submit a planning application, present our recommendations to the members and prepare for an EGM as we could see the AGGS developments would limit any future access across their land. The BLTC planning application was submitted at the beginning of October.

31. Please explain this ‘Window of Opportunity’ and why it is so important.

This window of opportunity includes, convenient access routes through the Girls Grammar, as this access will void the use of Elcho Road and greatly assist our neighbours. Without this access, there will be trucks and lorries up and down the neighbour’s road, 8 hours a day. The construction work involved in the project is immense, with soil removal and the delivery of sub-structure tarmac laying etc. Loosing this shared access would have considerable implications on the cost and cause disruptions for the club and neighbours at a future date. We also have support from the LTA and the chance to do the work in the quietest months.

AGGS have engaged the services of a landscape designer with plans to plant 23 trees, 70 scrubs, 8 climbers and 9 flower beds all around their new sports hall. Once their Sports Hall is constructed, it is highly likely we would be denied any plant access to our courts and therefore we would have to access over the wall on Elcho Road or use much smaller plant and come down the path extending the construction time and creating more disruption at the club.

Regardless of the outcome of the EGM, the committee feel this is good forward planning, as it is their remit to identify and consider all factors that will affect the security, future and long-term development of the club. The committee are extremely experienced and knowledgeable working with such major, complex and complicated projects, having already converted 4 grass courts and refurbished a further 5.

The membership was appraised of future development plans at the AGM on 10th March, however the committee acknowledge there are many new members who did not experience the conversion of the first 4 courts and existing members who need more time to consider the conversion of the remaining courts. This is why the EGM has been postponed to allow members more time to consider the proposals. Irrespective of the committee’s recommendations, it is the members who have the final vote, for or against, the motion.

32. Can you confirm that if we delay the vote by a month the plan to ‘piggy back’ on the works going on at the girl’s school will no longer be possible.

The construction period for the AGGS is expected to be 6 - 9 months. So, we estimate from December to August is our construction timescales.

33. Could we put up a board outside the club house for a week or so to show members the plans so they get the chance to comment on them? As many members have clearly not received emails would this not be a sensible thing to do?

It would be a sensible thing to do, and drawings of the court layout have been on display on the club house window since early September. Please see club house window.

34. I had heard that there was going to be some sort of social area for children where the current huts are. This is a great idea if it is true? Could the committee please confirm if this is the case or just rumour?

Just a rumour. The old huts are to be demolished and that is where the new reconfigured courts will do.

35. Will the 5 mini red courts be screened off from courts 3 and 4. Having lots of juniors on these courts when playing on court 3 and 4 will be hugely distracting.

The fence line separating court 3 & 4 from the mini courts will likely feature a 3.6m fence consistent with the boundary line. This will enable green screens to be added to limit visual distraction and help shelter play from adverse wind conditions. This will ensure that players on courts 3 and 4 and players on the mini courts are not overtly distracted by each other's play.

36. What is the surface for the 5 mini courts?

The surface of the 5 mini courts will be astro turf. This is the preferred surface for the oversized mini red felt tennis balls.

37. You state that "by moving 200 juniors onto the mini courts and a modest increase in members in 2021, the extra court time will allow for a significant increase in court capacity for all our members" Will the excess traffic created by 200 juniors and their parents back and forth picking them up not cause disruption to players on courts 5-8, and the new artificial acrylic courts if they go ahead?

200 min red juniors already access the club and walk past courts 13, then 12 and then 11 and then 10 along with 500 adult members. They also pass courts 7 and 5 on their way to the toilets and the overflow courts at AGGS and play behind courts 1 and 3 on their grass mini red courts.

38. The current red ball courts are situated next to the patio which allows parents the chance to watch their children whilst having a drink and a chat, enhancing the lovely social nature of our club. Would it not be more sensible to locate the mini-red courts at the heart of the club so parents can socialise and make use of club facilities whilst watching their children play?

Parents will still be able to watch the mini red players. We want to reconfigure the courts to make better use of the limited land we have.

39. Given the club's healthy finances, would it be possible to redo patio and access without rushing into 4 additional courts which can only be used in daylight hours? (Certainly, weekday daytime booking is not particularly a problem)?

The plan is to do both the patio area and the new courts at the same time to save time, costs and further disruption.

40. There is direct access to the grass courts running along the other side of the boundary fence behind courts 5 and 6. With the permission of the school this can be used anytime whether they have work being done or not so not sure what the problem is. Didn't we use this access for the conversion of courts 5-8?

The AGGS plans for the new sports hall is to have 11 trees planted along the boundary of Bowdon LTC and AGGS. This would prevent access to the courts once planted in the summer 2021

Financial implications

1. Are we not just taking on too much debt?

We have a low debt to asset ratio and the new courts will reduce the costs associated with grass court maintenance. This will enable us to repay members loans sooner should we wish. We will then have significant lower operating costs at the Club.

The LTA are keen to support us and have indicated an offer of an interest free loan up to £200,000 repayable over 10 years (£20,000 p.a. which we can pay off comfortably from our current revenue streams).

The Club has cash reserves of c£150,000; recent years have seen the transformation of the Club finances. Large increases in income from membership, coaching/camps and the bar/social coupled with improved control over non-members accessing the club, a new bar stock control system and grounds maintenance, mean we have surplus funds each year to repay capital on LTA and interest on member loans as well as repay the capital on the member loans.

2. It is possible that some members may request repayment of their loans if they strongly disagree with the proposed redevelopment of the grass courts. Has this contingency been taken into account in the financial forecasts?

We are aware that some members may want to have their members loans repaid if they strongly disagree with the proposed redevelopment of the grass courts. Those members who did provide a loan, agreed to a 5 year repayment plan. We did not accept all requests for member's loans and are aware of other members who wish to take up the loan offer of 5% interest.

3. When will the committee stop spending more and more money that we don't yet have?

We have to keep improving and maintaining our facilities. We only have 13 courts and these 4 remaining grass courts are the last courts to be refurbished. Every court will have been resurfaced in less than 4 years. Prior to this, we did not improve our facilities from the 2006 new Club house to the 2018 6 new artificial clay courts. That's 12 years of no investment and it coincided with a rapid decline in membership numbers. We cannot as a Club go back to such decline and under investment. We only have a certain footprint and cannot extend beyond our boundaries. However, we must continue to invest as well as manage our debt levels.

4. What is the estimated cost of respraying 4 poraflex porous acrylic tennis courts?

The current cost of respraying is £5 per m², so about £12,000 for all four courts on average every 5 years. The Club will have a sinking fund to cover one off costs such as repainting the courts every 5 years so that the cost is spread over the expected useful life and not as a one off cost in any one particular year.

5. This brings me to asking what level of ongoing maintenance is being budgeted. I am concerned about having a level which properly looks after 13 artificial courts (and the sweeping, treatment and sand management that these require) plus the job of looking after the considerable perimeter area we have - paths, hedges and fences.

We should allow for the same or only marginally reduced maintenance hours in the future, we need to step up our efforts on maintenance of the synthetic courts together with clubhouse and other areas. We should look to dispose of the grass court maintenance equipment to croquet or golf clubs

The intention is to invest further in the upgrading of paths / fences / borders / car park after completion of courts 1 to 4.

6. Finally, why has no cash flow forecast been presented? Surely this has been done to see how finances are will play out with loan payments (both the new loan and members loans).

The cost of the courts is c£261k. It is difficult to forecast the additional income from further members and coaching income. At our current level of membership and coaching income, the repayments of the LTA loan can be met. Tom Knight has prepared detailed cash flow projections for the next 2 years and they are available for review.

7. In terms of maintenance costs being saved - does that mean losing the groundsman?

We will retain the contract services for grounds maintenance but varied from those currently in place to better focus on the maintenance of the synthetic surfaces. We will no longer need the specialist lawn care services that are needed for the grass courts.

8. Are there any conditions for the LTA loan?

There is no specific condition attached to the LTA loan except for it to be used to improve tennis playing facilities and increase tennis participation at a Club.

9. How long is left on the floodlight lease?

We are nearly 2.5 years into the 5 lease on the floodlights. The annual cost of the light lease payments is £37,451 and they finish in 2023. After the lease is finished, title to the floodlights passes to the Club for a nominal fee.

10. Costs for the new courts – it's that £261,000 all in including relaying the new courts?

The estimated cost does include the relaying of the new courts. We will be seeking at least 3 competitive bids from qualified contractors. It does not include the costs for works to the patio area.

11. How much will it cost to light the top courts and has that money been set aside?

The estimated cost to floodlight courts 11, 12 and 13 is £90,000. This is already included in our projections as a cost in September 2021.

12. If the financial position of the club is strong, why change anything in this current climate.

We are going through such uncertain times where it is impossible to predict the long-term effect of the Covid pandemic. Taking on additional borrowings when the club already has considerable outstanding debt is potentially exposing the club to unnecessary risk.

It's a privilege to have grass courts as it differentiates us from other clubs. But with privilege comes cost. The boundary of the club is fixed. Having grass courts has a detrimental effect on many clubs sustainability as such a large footprint of grass is not only costly to maintain but also unusable for the majority of the year.

We currently have approximately 1,000 members and even in these most uncertain times we've had to close our membership. Our membership prices are substantially less than those of David Lloyd and Hale Country Club and as restrictions on indoor facilities will continue to be erratic for some time, we are a reliable outdoor alternative for many who wish to continue with sport, or tennis players looking for more reliable play.

If an economic downturn causes subscriptions to fall, the cost of the grass will have to be met by a smaller membership, which may lead to price increases.

If we resurface the 4 courts and remove the financial burden and restrictions of the grass, we will still have a loan to repay, however the availability of more all year round courts, will make it easier to replace any lost membership.

13. After completing the resurfacing of the last four grass courts, what will be the position of the club's finances.

In just 4 very short years, the committee will have resurfaced all 13 tennis courts at the Club, floodlit 9 of the 13 with the very latest, free to use, low energy retractable LED lighting and created space for 5 mini courts and implemented an online club management system and a new bar stock control and till system.

If we do complete the new courts and car park in 2021, we will have invested nearly £900k in 4 years into the facilities of the Club after 13 years of £nil investment and a rapid declining membership to the brink of insolvency.

Adult membership will have increased from 200 members in 2015 to over 500 in 2021. Junior membership income will have increased from £8,000 in 2016 to over £37,000 in 2021 and coaching income from £nil in 2016 to over £50,000 in 2021.

We would like to think that the club's finances will be in a good position before and after completing the resurfacing of the last four grass courts.

14. As we enter an inevitable period of economic recession and potential reduction in membership, will we be able to maintain loan repayments? Surely not only will membership drop but also the take up of coaching and the income generated will also reduce?

We currently have approximately 500 adults and 500 junior members.

During these most uncertain times, we have had to close the club to new members and have a small waiting list of both adults and juniors wanting to join the club. We have more demand for coaching than we have available coaching court time and recently coaching hours have had to be curtailed to balance the court usage. Our membership prices are a fraction of clubs like David Lloyd and Hale Country Club and as restrictions on indoor facilities will continue to be erratic for some time, we are a reliable outdoor alternative for many tennis players.

In the unlikely event that membership did fall, it would have to fall by over 66% before the club was unable to meet the LTA loan repayments and members loan interest payments.

Grass v all weather

1. The grass courts have been poor this season. Could this be explained by any changes to the regime for court maintenance since 2018 (e.g to save costs)?

No, the grass courts were playable very early after lockdown and benefitted from the good weather in April and May. The primary reason for the low availability of the grass this year has been inclement weather with many days of torrential rain resulting in localised flooding in Altrincham, all our courts survived these downpours, but grass just takes so long to dry and harden to a playable condition.

2. Please explain why the Committee state usage of the grass courts is diminishing, when they cannot provide evidence of this over a sustained period of time. Mike Senior stated at last weeks' meeting the statistics available for court usage are provided by ClubSpark which has only been in operation for one year and as such it does not provide true and accurate information regarding court use over a sustained period of time (a number of years). This is especially relevant this year due to Lockdown because of Covid-19 and so simply using data for this year allows the Committee to paint an unrealistic and potentially bias argument as to grass court usage. Some of the best weather for grass court tennis was lost with perfect weather conditions at the beginning of Lockdown as members were not allowed to play. furthermore, the grass courts were often closed - a notice having been placed in front of them - when the weather was good in the Summer months - this again created a false impression of usage. It may be argued that it was implemented as a strategy to work in favour of the motion to resurface them - allowing the Committee to state that there was only 12% usage in July? Many new members join the club partly due to the grass courts.

The recommendation to resurface the grass courts is not based on this season alone. 4 grass courts were resurfaced 2 years and now we are looking at the resurfacing of the remaining 4.

The club closed on the 23 March 2020 and reopened on 7 June. It is the first time the club has closed in living memory. The grass courts normally open around the 1st of May. We only lost 5 weeks, of grass usage even though it felt longer.

Replacing the remaining courts has been a consideration previously and this was presented in the 2019 annual report at the March 2020 AGM as follows:

“At some point in the near future we need to consider the 4 remaining grass courts. These courts are only open for 5 months of the year. When they are open in the summer, they are often wet and unplayable. Converting these courts in the future to an all-weather surface, will greatly increase our court capacity”

Unfortunately, just because it’s not raining doesn’t make the grass playable. Grass also becomes damp early evening so curtails play further.

The closed sign is used because they are damp/slippery and as such would be a Health and Safety issue. The sign brings clarity as dropping the nets wasn’t working.

Playing on them when they are spongy and damp also causes more damage and the grass takes longer to dry than all weather.

Due to summer lockdown and other sports being unavailable, we have had more members at the club during the day and more opportunity than ever to use the grass. However, in reality when given the choice to play on the fully open grass or all weather, members chose all weather circa 85% of the time.

Those members who didn’t even have to use their bookings and could roll up for social would often wait for the clay to become available, rather than play on the grass.

This year for the first time, we actually saw a strong anti-grass movement from our members. Public comments on the Bowdon Mixed Group 27/06/20 calling for the committee to provide them with 2/4 clay courts for social tennis. Comments include;

- ‘So no hard courts available for....club afternoon....that’s a real shame”
- ‘Club afternoon on grass courts is never going to work our English weather” (sic)
- “We need to have 2/4 clay courts as we used to have everyone can play ” (sic)
- “(club afternoon) it’s a major part of the club and should not be relegated to the 4 grass courts”
- “Adult members we need to claim the clay courts back for social tennis on a Saturday afternoon...we need at least 4 courts.”
- “The grass courts are only a standby, I need members to back me up on this if you agree”
- “It’s wrong if our social tennis isn’t available on a Saturday on clay”
- “I’m really hoping the clay courts might become available very soon for social”

If coaches can’t use the grass, it is unsuitable for juniors, team tennis mostly prefer the clay and social members are refusing to play on it, it is unclear who is left and at a cost of £42 per playing hour, this question it is pertinent to club’s finances.

Therefore, based on the above objections to grass play, it leads us to consider the actual availability of the grass courts. This is more relevant given that members would obviously prefer guaranteed court availability as above, rather than potentially being rained off or team captains having to reschedule matches.

Grass Court Hours (may-sep 11am till sunset)			All Weather Hours (8am till sunset)		
total available hours	1,502		total available hours	3,965	
total available days	153		total available days	365	
Average hours / day	10		Average hours / day	11	
Days lost to rain (metoffice WOODFORD)	57.2		Days lost to weather (allowance)	20	
Non Rain days	95.8		Non Rain days	345	
Non Rain hours	941		Non Rain hours	3,748	
Number of courts	4		Number of courts	4	Extra Court Hrs
total grass court available hours	3,763.04		total all weather court available hours	14,992	11,229

The existing configuration of courts and floodlights provide the club with 4,000 hours of grass court availability plus 34,000 of all-weather court hours plus 6,000 of all-weather floodlit court hours, which gives a total of @43,000 full size tennis courts hours.

In the event that the club moved to replace the grass this would change to 49,000 of all-weather court hours plus 6,000 of all-weather floodlit court hours, which gives a total of @55,000 full size tennis courts hours. PLUS 19,000 mini court hours.

As we hope to receive approval of the planning application for floodlights on courts 11, 12 and 13 early next year, we will then have available 49,000 of all-weather court hours plus 9,000 of all-weather floodlit court hours, which gives a total of @58,000 full size tennis courts hours. PLUS 19,000 mini court hours.

	NOW	EARLY 2021	LATE 2021
Status	Available Court Hours		
	With Grass	No Grass	With Floodlit 5-13
Courts 1-4	3,763		
Courts 5-13	33,731		
Courts 1-13		48,723	48,723
Floodlights 5-10	5,805	5,805	
Floodlights 5-13			8,708
	43,299	54,528	57,430
Mini Courts	1,882	18,739	18,739

3. It actually helps management of court usage to have seasonal courts which come online at peak times.

Historically with 8 grass courts, poor carpet on 5 and only two floodlit, the club was used very little from November to March. Also, the demographics of the club, meant that during July and August and other school holidays it was quiet as many people in the area go away. However, the aim of the committee has been to iron out these peaks and troughs and create an all year, all weather club. Our membership has changed and widened so we don't lose a large demographic in the summer. Plus, winter league team tennis has given those who enjoy team tennis, an opportunity to play during the winter. Taking into account the constraints all outdoor tennis clubs have, we have managed to achieve fairly consistent play.

4. Inclement weather consideration.

With such variable weather, the opportunity to successfully play on the grass for the last 5 years has greatly reduced. For some, it is always a pleasure to play on the grass, but it comes with severe limitations.

Regardless of covid, furlough etc, members have more time, want exercise and fresh air and to play all year. We've seen over recent years how the loss of 30% of our court capacity in October, has created more problems every autumn.

Even in the summer, our weather has become unpredictable and this is only going to get worse with global warming. With grass courts the baselines wear away in very dry or wet conditions, court bookings are cancelled, courts still may not be dry enough to play until mid-afternoon, evenings are affected by dew and tournaments and team matches have to be rescheduled.

Membership

1. Are you just looking to increase membership even more...isn't the Club already full now?

No, and it is not a primary driver although court utilisation versus demand will determine a practical membership limit. We have a small waiting list and the adult and junior membership is currently closed.

2. What is the current membership limit and what would you propose it to be should the grass courts go?

Membership at BLTC is currently closed to all new members. We are entering the winter season with the loss of the grass courts and the 3 unlit courts 11, 12 and 13 in the evening. So we only have 6 playable courts in the evening. Current membership numbers are:

Adults	493
Juniors	501
Total	994

The new courts will increase our court capacity by between 35% and 40%. When the committee reopens the membership in 2021, we will carefully monitor membership numbers and court usage.

By moving 200 juniors onto the mini courts and a modest increase in members in 2021, the extra court time will allow for a significant increase in court capacity for all our members.

3. With regard to the voting system implemented by the Committee for Wednesday evening, please confirm who they have appointed as an independent adjudicator to ensure transparency to all members. Also, please confirm details of the voting system and that it has the capacity to deal with 100's of votes as it was only tested on a small number of members last week. Please can the Committee confirm which members are entitled to vote - do non-playing/social Members get a vote, as this could be deemed unfair to those junior members who fall just below the age of 18 years, but who play regularly, support the coaches and club financially and are passionate about the future of the club?

Please see voting process Q & A document

4. Have we fulfilled the constitutional requirement to notify all members of the date, time and place including complying with the notice period of the proposed EGM? It appears that many members have not received notification or it has gone into their junk folder.

We have sent notices to all registered email address and also notices on the WhatsApp groups that these notices have been issued by email.

5. Over 102 members on the thread the BLTC Voice yesterday 54% of requested that they be given extra time to consider the proposal. This will give people the time to discuss and the changes and may well result in more members being happy with the proposal. Is it unreasonable of the membership to make this request?

This has now been addressed

6. Can you confirm that if we don't vote on Wednesday but delayed for a month this loan will no longer be available?

This has now been addressed

7. How will the voting work given that the constitution appears to say only those present may vote? We appear to have 2 EGMs. Which EGM is it essential? Will you insist on cameras being turned on so that you can ensure the vote is legitimate?

Please see voting process Q & A document

8. How will we ensure that everyone who votes is a full playing member? I think non players may be on the various WhatsApp groups where the link is posted?

Please see voting process Q & A document

- 9. It's the long-standing members who fully understand the heritage/history of our club and why they are so passionate about saving the grass courts.**

All (new or old) members views are appreciated and equally valid regarding the grass courts, as we consider history and future progress.

- 10. Is the result of the vote just a majority decision? I am concerned that we may be faced with a Brexit style 51/49 split which leaves us with a disgruntled membership either way. It is essential to the club to retain their 'ordinary' loyal and enthusiastic tennis players.**

Please see voting process Q & A document. David Odling our President will chair the vote and as per previous EGM's and in line with the constitution, it is a simple majority decision.

- 11. The pandemic has prevented a 2020 AGM.**

The 2020 AGM was held in the clubhouse on Tuesday 10th March 2020.

- 12. I'm uncomfortable with major, long-term infrastructure decisions being made by Zoom, which will depress voter participation among different membership demographics. This is, in turn will likely have different views on preferred court surfaces. Seems like it could lead to an unrepresentative outcome.**

Please see voting process Q & A document which outlines the process for a zoom vote due to current Covid restrictions. The extensive Q and A Document and scheduled consultations are available and there to provide all information to hand and are open to all membership demographics.

- 13. Are we using an independent firm - don't want people thinking the vote might be rigged??**

Please see voting process Q & A document.

Court Allocation

- 1. Why are there mini courts?**

Junior tennis is a key part of the Club's objectives and mini-tennis is a core part of junior provision and development. To date most is carried out on normal courts using temporary nets so having permanent courts in smaller areas frees up courts for normal play. The space planned cannot fit another full-size court. This approach will again increase available full-size court hours.

- 2. Will you increase the maximum number of court bookings up from the current 3 hours per week?**

The grass courts are only open for 5 months (just 21 weeks) and this year, due to the weather and covid, they have only been playable for around 13 weeks in total. 4 new all-weather courts for 52 weeks will increase total court capacity by **37%** (assuming 600 hours of current use) and therefore we should be able to increase the maximum number of court bookings per member per week when the new courts come online.

- 3. If the proposals are approved, will the committee undertake that at least 4 courts are ring fenced for members use at all times (i.e.no coaching/no teams)?**

Once the new courts are developed, the fair allocation to different sections of the membership will be regularly reviewed, however, we are unable to ring fence any courts to any particular usage be it coaching, juniors, team tennis or the general membership.

5. These courts will just be used by the teams who are taking over the Club.

The demand for team tennis is being driven from the members and has become more popular in recent years. the summer the club will operate 5 Ladies teams, 5 Mens teams, 2 regional tennis teams and over 25 junior teams. We have grown into one of the biggest team tennis clubs in Cheshire. However:

180 adults, which is 40% of our adult membership, play in the adult teams.

150 juniors, which is 45% of our playing junior membership, play in the junior teams.

6. Point 5 of the document circulated states that during summer, two team home matches will be possible on 3 courts per team - I presume that means 6 courts, and would that be most nights?

The new courts will allow for 2 team tennis matches per night to be played on the 6 of the 13 courts in the summer (April to July). We will have 10 adult teams playing 10 matches in the summer (5 at home and 5 away). Therefore, 50 home team matches over 4 months is approximately 12.5 matches per month. If we can have 2 teams playing per evening that is just 6 team match nights in the summer per month.

We do not envisage team matches being hosted on a Wednesday evening as these evenings in the summer will be predominately for members (social and private bookings)

It is likely we would have team matches on either a Monday, a Tuesday or a Thursday evening on 6 of the 13 courts during the summer months of April to July.

We will continue where possible, to utilise the 3 tennis courts at AGGS for our junior home matches.

7. Does the Committee envisage that the proposed new courts provide more junior coaching and therefore are of little benefit to adult members who work and would need floodlight courts for 7 months of the year to get any real benefit out of the new courts - how can the expense be justified when they, nor the Mini Red Courts will be floodlight and therefore have limited use? Given that it is dark at 4pm in the winter months - would it not be difficult to coach on these Mini Red courts at that time of the year?

The new courts will be available for all members and all categories such as team, social, coach lead, junior and general membership bookings.

Most mini red lessons (age group 4-8) are between 4pm to 6pm and these mini red courts will be used for 8 months per year in the evening, all year round at weekends and until 5pm where possible in the winter. Indoor mini red will also continue to operate out of The Boys Grammar. The new purpose-built mini red courts will also be used, all day during the 18 weeks of holiday camps.

8. With regard to the question of ring-fencing courts - the question was asked at last weeks' meeting and Mike Senior said he was not prepared to ring fence courts. However, this issue was raised again on WhatsApp BLTC Mixed Tennis and there is some confusion, with the suggestion it can be resolved at a later date - see conversation below:

We will monitor court allocation and demand, however, we are unable to ring fence any courts permanently to any particular section of the membership.

9. There will be 13 courts if and when the grass courts are converted. Please can you give some guarantee to members as to how many courts will be allocated for their use at peak times i.e. Between 5 and 8.

The new courts will be used for more tennis for all members and all sections of the club.

10. In your q and a you stated “given levels of membership, we would always have at least 4 courts available to coaching, 4 courts available to teams and 4 courts available to the general membership at any point in time”, please can you clarify what you mean by ‘given levels of membership’?

In the first Q & A we stated “**we would hope that**, given levels of membership.....” ,

The current levels of membership of approx. 500 adults and 500 juniors is the meaning of “given levels of membership”

11. You stated that team tennis is one of the biggest recruiters of new members to the club.

It is, but it doesn’t receive any more priority than the other sections of the club.

180 adults and 150 juniors are playing competitive summer tennis. 40% of our adult members play in the summer teams.

12. Could you please clarify what regional tennis teams are, as you stated there will be two of these?

What this may be referring to is the LTA National League which is for stronger players and is a mixture of singles and doubles. There are tiers to this league and we are in the Regional tier for the summer men’s, and in the County tier for summer ladies. The winter versions are only County (i.e. there is no regional tier in the Winter)

13. Is there sufficient demand from the members for teams in the National Leagues?

Yes. For many years the club had a very restricted and controlled team tennis structure; Bowdon 1, Bowdon 2 etc. With the increase in membership, demand for more team tennis and the different levels of tennis now available at the club, these teams have been realigned and made more accessible to all members. Feedback from the members is it feels refreshing to have such a variety of tennis to compete with, or against, at the club.

Our performance package is strictly by invite only and it is a very fluid category. There may be 1 player or 8 players invited throughout the year, depending on availability, injury or whether they are even in the country. This sponsored membership could be for a day, a week or a year.

We work very hard to identify and attract players of this calibre to complement our teams. With a mixture of our regular 1st team players and our performance players competing together, they are representing and promoting BLTC as a club that can now compete and be accepted into the higher leagues of tennis.

Most importantly, this combination allows our regular 1st team players access to a level of tennis, they might not normally be exposed to.

National League home matches are a great spectator opportunity and motivation for those adults and juniors who wish to improve. However, with Bowdon having 7 adult WL teams playing in divisions 1-12, 10 adult and 25 junior teams competing in the summer league and over 40% of adults playing team tennis, these 2 or 3 National League teams, do not alter the fundamental team tennis, or social fabric of the club.

BLTC are committed to supporting all members and the level of competitive tennis they wish to play, from beginner to advanced and we also encourage those of our regular first team members, who want the opportunity to play at this level.

14. How many players and it would also be great to know of those how many are full paying junior or adult members?

4 Players per match and it's a mixture of our regular 1st team players and our sponsored performance players.

15. How many players? How many regional tennis teams are planned in the next five years?

If you referring to LTA National League then we are planning on 1 or 2 men's and 1 lady's team for the coming year. Beyond that we'll see what the demand, performance and impact is like and review.

In comparison we have 7 teams and 113 players taking part in the North East Cheshire League across divisions 1-12.

16. Do sponsored performance players have a vote?

No.

17. I'm all for the clubs first teams to succeed, however, I am embarrassed by the drafting in of "elite" players to win at all costs which has happened in the past. I feel club tennis teams should be authentic and made up of members who have a vested interest in the club which they play for. Somewhere along the line we have lost the enjoyment aspect of playing for your club .. now it seems win first, enjoy second. I'm sorry but I'm not planning on making tennis my next career choice, so please can we chill out on that one?!

We appreciated that some members may not be playing in the same team level they had enjoyed under the previous structure. However, to keep this in perspective;

- ✓ Bowdon has 7 adult WL teams playing across divisions 1 to 12.
- ✓ 10 adult and 25 junior teams competing in the summer league, making us the biggest team tennis club in the North.
- ✓ 40% of adults (180) are playing team tennis.

The 8 players who have provided Bowdon and it's higher level of regular players the opportunity to play in the national league are 1.5% of our membership and 4% of our regular team tennis membership. They do not alter the fundamental team tennis, or social fabric of the club. BLTC are committed to supporting **ALL** members and the level of competitive tennis they wish to play, from beginner to advanced, from chilled to serious.

Men, women and juniors of all ages and abilities and levels belong to BLTC. The juniors wear their BLTC kit with pride and the club is very lucky to have such fantastic representation across 12 divisions in both summer and winter league tennis.

18. As a long standing (older!!!) member of the club I feel that the ethos of the club has changed recently from a club to play social tennis and friendly team tennis to a determination to put an emphasis on bringing in players to 'ensure' teams win!

Please see note 17 above to understand the actual number of players involved. In addition;

Our valued adult and junior members all choose to spend their time at BLTC differently. Some only wish to play social tennis, others more competitive team tennis, others in coach led sessions and others with just their family or close friends. All members are treated equally and it is the committee's role to manage the demand and expectations of ALL areas of the club.

We understand the importance of the established social tennis groups our longest standing members play in and the committee wish to support this important and crucial fabric of the club. We gave it particular focus this year, as Covid made the club busier in the day and may have interrupted what we believed to be a vital opportunity, for our more senior members to still meet safely and play tennis within their social friendship groups.

Therefore, earlier in the year, the committee welcomed requests from social members to pre-book courts throughout the year, during off peak times. We do not ring fence courts for particular sectors of the club, but we are happy to support a limited number of off peak block bookings.

We approved 10 x block bookings per week which equates to over 30 court hours and guaranteed set days and times for 60 members. We set social sessions on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays which equated to 34 court hours.

So rather than the club ethos changing and irrelevant of what leagues our team players chose to compete in, we actually have over 60 hours of protected court hours per week, for social and senior tennis and we still welcome applications for off peak block bookings.

Having tennis players of a high standard, does not affect how we have strived to make BLTC not only a fantastic social club but also a fabulous family club. This year we have not had intraclubs, wintraclubs, the annual tournament with nightly suppers, BBQ's, various internal tournaments, family tournaments, junior tournament, social suppers, Friday family club nights, and the charity events that we would normally hold throughout the year.

19. With so many daytime courts, will BLTC be hosting many large tournaments

We need more courts to satisfy the demand for more court capacity from the members at all times during the day, evening, weekends, summer, winter.

We hope that the traditional summer tournament will increase back to previous capacity levels and we hope to host other internal tournaments, family tournaments and our traditional intraclub evenings. We recently hosted the Fred Perry tournament by releasing 4 courts out of 13 for two days. These types of non-invasive tournaments attract bar, club hire and sponsorship opportunities that adds to the finances of BLTC without us having to rely on increased membership revenue or increased coaching contribution.

Coaching

1. Are these courts just for the coaches who have taken over the Club?

No, all courts are for the entire membership. The coaches working at the Club provide a high value and quality service to the members who seek to improve and provide significant income streams to the Club. Members are demanding more and better coaching at the Club and the committee supports meeting that demand.

2. Is the club's strategy to develop Bowdon into an LTA LPDC?

Having researched the meaning of LTA LPDC, we understand this to be a Local Player Development Centre. This would require indoor facilities which we do not have so we would be unable to become an LPDC. That is not the strategy of the club.

However, we support and encourage every adult and junior member of the club with their development and enjoyment of tennis, whether it be social, club, team, county or higher.

3. Due to the difficulty with access to bookable courts members have asked for clarification on coaching and team hours.

All home Tuesday & Thursday team matches have been moved off 'prime time' slots; some of these to play away and others to one of the following alternatives 'Team Slots'; Saturday 6.30pm, Sunday 12.30pm, 3.30pm or 6.30pm.

This will free up a significant number of court hours in the evening for members. This is now in effect and will remain in place for the rest of the winter league period. One of Sunday's National League matches will be re-arranged & booking on ClubSpark has been released. Court allocation for members wanting coaching and members who do not, is an ongoing monitoring process.

- 4. I have been a member of the club for over 40 years. There was (sic) always two coaches. In the good old days it was Christine and Lorryne, then Lorryne and Emma, and finally Emma and Will. Why 10?!**

Prior to the current committee changing the coaching strategy in 2016 and Phil Spencer becoming Bowdon's new Head of Tennis, we actually had 5 coaches (not 2); Head Coach Emma, Nick, Will, Roberto and Vicky. During all this time the coaches made no financial contribution to the club to cover court hire, clubhouse use, floodlights, wear and tear and access the membership etc. In addition to this, 200+ juniors were playing at the club for free unpaid membership along with some parents and adults. Those present at the EGM in 2016 will recall the committee's steadfast resolve to tackle this issue for the benefit of the whole membership. A conservative estimate of the coaching and membership revenue BLTC lost in the 'good old days' leading up to Emma leaving, is between £40,000 and £60,000 per annum.

We now have 3 full time coaches Phil, Alex and Andy. Plus 7 part time coaches/assistant coaches who range from a few hours, to a few days a week. All coaches are registered BLTC coaches and pay to use BLTC's facilities and access our membership. Phil is tasked with securing the services of the best coaches in the North West, growing the membership and developing revenue streams. All of which he has made a great success of.

The demand for coaching is such that we could double our coaching team, however like all other areas of the club we have to manage demand and capacity.

- 5. BLTC is unbelievably privileged to have some of the best coaches in the north but 11 is surely overkill.. especially when we have 4 who are top of their game. To not be able to get a court because of an inflated coaching program makes no sense.**

We do not have 11 coaches, see note 4 above. We do not run an inflated coaching program. Our ratio of coaches to courts and members is the same as it has been for approximately 8 years. More members, equals more demand.

- 6. As a parent of twin 9 year olds I would like to give you some insight into the contribution of the junior members. It's true that membership is less, however most children will be enrolled in at least 1 group lesson. The cost of these have increased this Sept from £8 per class to £12 per class. (£168 per term). So for my children I pay for 3 group lessons a week (£168 x3) which is an extra £504 per term! In the zoom meeting when Mike Senior said that the club was buoyant for funds because of club spark, what he is really saying, is that it's the junior members who are paying for the new court surfaces. On behalf of junior members, I would like to know:-
Who made the decision to increase prices, and by what process?
Can you publish your full charging structure (coach fees/club fees/ head coach commission?)
For clarity, my friends child attended a class with 16 kids paying £12 each (£192 for one lesson, £2688 per term) can you identify how this money has been distributed?**

Good point raised. I have been having this debate myself with the club the last couple of months and still don't feel I have had a straight answer. This is not just the case for junior but also an issue for adult lessons. This statement in email responses about the increase in costs concerned me "Since 2018 the club has also invested in six new artificial clay courts with floodlights and last year a further three new courts with advantage pro tiger turf at a total investment cost of over £600,000. That large investment needs to have contributions from all areas of the club, including the coaching program." If we are increasing coaching prices to pay off the previous £600k my concern is what will happen to costs when we take on more debt with the new courts? Whilst I think the coaching team are fantastic, we are pricing ourselves way above local clubs.

For those adults and juniors who want coaching, there is a choice of group squads, shared lessons or individual 1-2-1's.

The prices of the junior group coaching sessions have been static for 3 years and were between £7.50 and £10 per hour. Now, depending on the type of session and the level of the coach, they are between £7.50 and £12 per hour.

We have recently introduced reduced group sizes, caps on player numbers, lower player to coach ratios and tennis leaders to provide on court assistance to maintain the quality of the groups.

Adult group sessions are between £6 and £12 per hour depending on the session.

320 juniors and 70 adults are happily having weekly group sessions and over 50 members are happily having 1-2-1 private lessons. For court management, transparency and financial control, all sessions are listed, booked and paid for on ClubSpark.

Our coaching program is now one of the largest in the North of England and has attracted juniors from other clubs including those with indoor courts, because our junior membership is fraction of the price, our coaching program is superior and our group prices are in-line with other clubs.

Each club's financial and operating structure is different. We are not comparing ourselves to clubs that have financial support from the LTA or national lottery, or whose coaches are paid a retainer, or who are running loss leading offers to fill their courts, or like The Northern who have lost 30% of their membership in 2020 and so have had to increase their off-peak membership by 50%.

With prices starting at £6 per hour, group members can be trained at BLTC, a private members premium club, with premium facilities, by a premium coach, with floodlights included.

Our groups are full and we have waiting lists for lessons and new juniors to join. We are therefore not looking at changing our charging structure.

We have no desire to be the 'economy brand' tennis club in the North West, only to be flooded with adults and juniors looking for the cheapest tennis on offer. This will only push up demand and exacerbate congestion. There is actually a stronger argument to increase prices to curb demand, however this is not an area under consideration at the moment.

Heart v Head

1. I still prefer the grass.

The grass courts have always been special, but it is unfortunate that the prevailing weather in our location limits the use of grass courts such that the maintenance of them is extremely expensive per available court hour.

2. We have had grass courts at Bowdon since 1877; can we not just keep 2 of the 4 remaining grass courts?

The costs of maintaining just two grass courts outweighs the benefits. We will need to maintain specialist grass court equipment and groundsman services for 2 courts and this cannot be financially justified.

3. Do we have to change the Club name?

No. Bowdon Lawn Tennis Club is the legal name of the Club. The game of lawn tennis can be played on any surface not just lawn. The name "Lawn Tennis" is to differentiate the sport from its sister game, Real Tennis.

4. What is the urgency to push ahead so quickly with such an important irreversible decision?

It will be nearly 3 years since we resurfaced courts 5, 6, 7 and 8. We did not have the membership, or the court capacity issues to justify doing all 8 grass courts at the same time. We now have the membership pressures and the associated court capacity issues and so need to complete the full resurfacing of the remaining grass courts.

We also now have a committed and highly skilled volunteer facilities team to see this project through to completion.

The planned construction will also match the proposed construction of the AGGS sports hall that starts in the coming months. We now have a window of opportunity to complete the final resurfacing of the last 4 remaining courts.

5. Given the amount of comments, opinions and feelings that the Committee's motion to resurface the grass courts has generated amongst the members, does the Committee truly feel that it has correctly gauged the atmospherics of the members with regards to feelings about the grass courts and the club's heritage? Given the feeling regarding the grass courts, is the Committee acting in the club and members' best interests? Please confirm this is not a move towards a performance academy for the club, which would only benefit a small cabal of individuals and not all members. Also that the proposed courts would not allow for an increase in Membership - adult or junior or more coaching staff? (Particularly coaching staff from outside of BLTC, which we have experienced recently.)

The committee is elected by the membership to run the club on a day to day basis, however significant changes are voted for by the membership using the EGM process. The committee are made up of independently minded individuals, who cover all sections of the club and make recommendations in the best long-term interests and security of the club. However, it is the members who have the final vote, for or against, the motion.

We are not an academy and we never will be. We get no LTA funding; we have no indoor facilities nor do we operate from 6am til 10pm. We are not a Bolton tennis academy or a Bath tennis academy. We have a handful of academy players, 4 or 5 juniors out of 500 juniors - just 1%, who mostly train daily out of their own academy. We do however have academy standard coaches such as Alex, Phil, Andy, Simon. We make no apology for having the best coaching team at Bowdon who are producing and attracting some great tennis players. There are no coaching staff from outside of BLTC at the club. All are registered coaches and all pay the same contribution to the club.

We do have a hierarchy of ability of players for coaching. No different than having an adult's 1st team who do not play with the 5th team.

We celebrate the fact the level of adult and junior tennis has improved at the club and members have a wide range of excellent opponents to play with and against. It is the remit of the coaching team to develop tennis at the club and they appear to be doing a great job of it.

The new courts will increase our court capacity by 35% to 40%. When the committee reopens the membership in 2021, we will carefully monitor membership numbers and court usage. We estimate that we would allow membership numbers to increase by up to 10%, however we will not hesitate to close the adult and junior membership if deemed necessary, as we have already done.

Other

1. Will there be further opportunity for members to comment on the proposed layout of the courts?

Yes, during the consultation period.

2. If the new courts are agreed, will we have some sort of paid steward to run bar/coffees etc? It seems that if we have many parents hanging around, we will need some facility which isn't just run by volunteers.

We are considering a Club Steward role as demand increases and the club and clubhouse in general is getting busier, however there would have to be financial assessment of this.

We have witnessed recently through various WhatsApp messages, how connected members are to the club and their desire to be fully involved and consulted on its operation. We are hoping this will manifest itself into more volunteers taking roles and responsibilities in a club they feel so passionate about.

3. Wheelchair tennis program is a great idea, are there any other plans for community tennis in our long-term growth strategy or bursaries for disadvantaged children who may benefit from this type of opportunity?

We are a private members club and when our membership reopens, members of the community can join the club. There have been some initial discussions on bursaries for disadvantaged children, but nothing has been finalised.

However, in the meantime and along with various member organised charity events held at the club, the committee along with Phil Spencer and the coaching team have developed our own range of community initiatives. We have;

- ✓ Provided free of charge training for over 100 local teenage tennis leaders, which we have been recognised for regionally and nationally by the LTA.
- ✓ Signed off over 30 Duke of Edinburgh programs.
- ✓ Worked closely with the LTA and **Tennis for Free Foundation**, for the last three years delivering free tennis lessons on a Saturday and Sunday afternoon at John Leigh and Stamford Park. To include all equipment, rackets, balls, cones etc.
- ✓ Provided free mini nets, rackets, balls, cones and lines to local schools.
- ✓ Provided free training to teachers to coach mini tennis.
- ✓ Encouraged local schools to host their summer PE lessons for free at the club, as part of our commitment to growing tennis participation in schools. We have coached these PE lessons for free.
- ✓ Organised and hosted free tournaments for local schools in Trafford.
- ✓ Hosted free open days, introduction to tennis and provided free mini red rackets and balls for juniors.
- ✓ Worked with the Davis Cup players, hosted events for and contributed to their charity **Bright Ideas for Tennis**.

4. Please could the committee share its vision and strategy for future development?

The current volunteer committee, its junior committee and our many valuable volunteer sub committees, formed in 2016. They have succeeded in driving through unprecedented investment, development and change, to bring Bowdon Lawn Tennis Club from the brink of collapse, back to one of the finest tennis clubs in the North of England.

The LTA championed our vision and provided access to funding. However, more importantly, it was the 2016 membership, who are to be acknowledged and recognised by the members of today, as they provided the real chance and opportunity to develop BLTC into the club you all now know and enjoy so much.

It's difficult for our recent members to imagine and maybe some of our oldest members have forgotten, that exactly 4 years ago as we languished in mid-autumn, BLTC was not the vibrant club you see today. It was cold, dark and gloomy. With empty, ripped, slippery carpet, 2 poor floodlights, no Head Coach and on the verge of insolvency.

Our members, voted in and also put their faith in a new committee provided substantial personal loans and have supported the club through 4 years of unparalleled transformation.

Our members commitment to the club and the committee's vision and strategy, have been rewarded and acknowledged by Cheshire LTA, as we were awarded successively;

- ✓ 2017 Tennis Club of the Year
- ✓ 2018 Team Tennis Club of the Year
- ✓ 2019 Coach of the Year
- ✓ 2020 Runner up North of England Coach of the year

Our vision for the club continues to be, maximise the existing facilities in terms of improving and enhancing them and our objective remains to encourage participation in and facilitate the playing of tennis.

5. I've got more questions?

If there is anything further you need to know, please email committee@bowdonlta.com

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