

## **Appendix D: Why Online Booking, Booking Fee & Gate Access?**

### **Context**

Tennis plays a unique role in keeping the nation active, as a sport that can be played by all, no matter their age, gender, background or ability, and as both an entry point to tennis and a hub for regular social play, park courts are central to this.

Park tennis courts are vital in helping open up the sport to more people, with 1.7 million people playing on park courts in the last 12 months and almost half being from lower socio-economic groups.

### **LTA insight tells us:**

- **Over 1.7 million adults** play tennis on a park court every year
- **44%** of people who play tennis each year do so in a park (in comparison 20% played in a club setting)
- 3.4 million children aged 4-15 played tennis over the course of the year **Over a third (35%) said they had played on a park court**

Despite this significant latent demand, there are a number of barriers for park tennis players to get on court:

- Many Local Authority budgets have not allowed for investment into tennis courts, resulting in over 4,500 park tennis courts being classified as in very poor or unplayable condition.
- Players often have no way of finding and booking a tennis court
- Players cannot always access tennis courts upon arrival i.e. gates often padlocked or being used for non-tennis activity etc.
- Players often have no way of finding someone to play with

Increasingly, potential players want a more simple, convenient and flexible way to play the sport, often without the commitment or cost of joining a club.

With all of this in mind the Government and LTA have identified a need to create more sustainable park tennis facilities, and as such have announced a £30 million package to refurbish more than 4,500 public tennis courts across UK, and support a new generation of players to get into the sport.

### **Why chose a low cost affordable operational model with Gate Access & Online Booking?**

The LTA are supportive of a sustainable operational model that would safeguard the long term future of parks tennis facilities. A mixed operational model that consists of recreational pay & play, targeted free access, affordable family passes and community coaching would achieve that operational balance between sustainability, accessibility, and inclusivity.

A sustainable operational model of this nature would also allow Local Authority partners to explore the feasibility of further developing key park sites to increase playing hours and therefore all year

round participation through additions such as floodlights. This would also provide all year round community accessible tennis facilities and support the LTA's mission to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable.

Please see some further benefits of a sustainable operational model, detailed below:

### Increasing Participation & Sustainability

- Equitable access i.e. all residents have the same booking rights, and therefore increases participation & improving the health and well-being impact of the sport
- Understand who uses your courts & when to support future development plans
- Ability and confidence to 'sell' dedicated block booked court time to community coaching partners
- Tennis courts require an annual maintenance schedule and to generate a sinking fund of £1,200 per court per annum
- This solution allows the operator to generate an income from tennis, to create a sustainable facility. Ensuring the courts can be maintained to a safe standard and remain a community sporting asset.
- Facilitates different pricing models for distinct groups of people (e.g. offering free/discounted targeted usage/activity to those low income households)
- Places a value on each individual booking and therefore prevents consistent no shows compared to a free booking system

### Customer Journey

- Provides the customer with an online booking journey (95% of households have a smartphone).
- Players need convenience and simplicity, key barrier to participation is not knowing where/when/how to book a court
- Players want guaranteed booking slots, due to a squeeze on leisure time.
- Provides a platform to promote tennis to the whole community - marketing via database & website – and aligns to LTA national marketing campaigns – again increasing participation
- There is an app that will help people to find others to play with

### Protect the asset

- Proven to increase usage, therefore footfall, therefore community ownership & self-policing, reducing ASB
- Redirects non-tennis use to designated areas i.e. MUGAs / Green space
- Allows for remote management and confidence of operation
- Supports safeguarding practices – you know who is using the courts and when. Each player agrees to and is made aware of safeguarding, diversity and inclusion policies at the point of booking
- Efficiently monitor unauthorised coaching and commercial usage

## Tennis Court Operation Technology

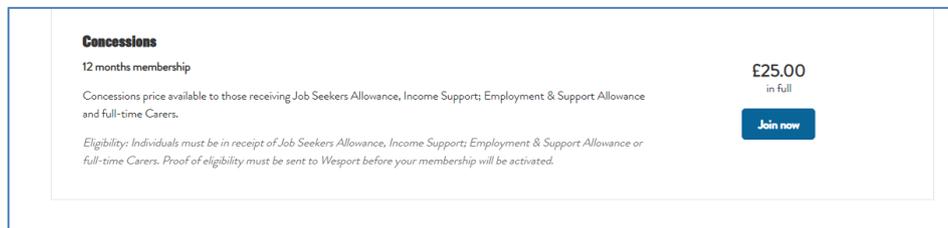
The technology works by a booking online triggering an email to the user with a four-digit PIN code which opens the gate at the time of booking. The gate is self-closing and self-locking. The gates are in place at over two hundred locations across the UK in areas with all the IMD (1-10) classifications.

## Pricing Structure / Eligibility

This model proposes that the main charging method would be for an entire household to purchase a 'pass' to play for 12 months (with no further cost to play). This is the main method of generating the income to sustain tennis courts in parks. The courts can / are also sold per hour for those not wishing to commit to play all year round.

The data from other projects supports that many people who have 'tried' the courts by booking once convert to paying an annual fee for the entire household as it offers better value to those wishing to play more regularly.

Recognising there are some communities where this presents a challenge, councils have introduced a concessions price on the same model (see excerpt from the website below) where those providing proof of receipt of state financial support (in some form) to the court operator were invited to have the same access for £25 (or in some instances, free of charge) rather than the full price of £35 per household per year. Whilst this could be made free to the user, it is recommended to put some value on the concession even if small, so the user has some 'buy in' to the contribution to sustain the courts they use as tennis players.



The screenshot shows a website interface for a concessions membership. It features the following text:

- Concessions**
- 12 months membership
- £25.00 in full
- Concessions price available to those receiving Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support; Employment & Support Allowance and full-time Carers.
- Join now (button)
- Eligibility: Individuals must be in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support; Employment & Support Allowance or full-time Carers. Proof of eligibility must be sent to Wesport before your membership will be activated.*

## Organised Activity

Aside from the pricing model / eligibility the main way of providing the accessibility to the community is through organised activity or coaching. The LTA partners closely with [Tennis for Free](#) who fund a weekly coaching session for all ages where equipment is provided, and a coach facilitates the session. The LTA also has programmes for supporting the development of young people ([SERVES](#)) and a dedicated programmes for those with disabilities ([Open Court](#)) that can be linked into this project.

In addition, those that operate the courts are free to set up community projects at no charge to the end user. For example, in a number of areas across the country, projects with asylum seekers,

underrepresented ethnic groups, those with a disability are all provided at no cost to the user, either through surpluses from those that pay to play or from external funding. These sessions are all organised by the operator, built around income generating model for courts in the Borough. If the operator is external to the council these projects could be made mandatory in the agreement to operate the courts.