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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>17 January 2012</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Environmental &amp; Commercial Services</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>SSC/ENV/IM/11.86</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Willie Rennie</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>714761</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Queen Elizabeth Playing Fields Challenge</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise about the Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge and to seek approval to nominate three playing fields for inclusion in it.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge is a new programme to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It is a landmark project to create a permanent, tangible and relevant legacy from the two major events scheduled to occur in the UK in 2012; Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics. The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge aims to safeguard hundreds of playing fields in perpetuity for future generations in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee and as a permanent tribute to Queen Elizabeth. Each Local Authority throughout the United Kingdom is being asked to nominate a series of playing fields in their area that they would be happy to protect as a Queen Elizabeth Field.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the committee approve the nomination of 3 Inverclyde Council sites to be included in The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge:
- Battery Park;
  - George Road Playing Fields; and
  - Ravenscraig Playing Field and Athletics Track;
- 3.2 That the committee agree in principle to the Council participating in the Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge subject to a suitable Minute of Agreement being agreed between the Council and Fields in Trust; and
- 3.3 That the Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment be remitted to enter into discussion with Fields in Trust with a view to negotiating a suitable Minute of Agreement to allow Inverclyde Council to participate in the Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge.

**Aubrey Fawcett**  
**Corporate Director Regeneration & Environment**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge is a new programme to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It is a landmark project to create a permanent, tangible and relevant legacy from the two major events scheduled to occur in the UK in 2012; Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics.
- 4.2 Access to outdoor space is vital for communities and plays an important role in providing a place for both physical activity and relaxation. The Inverdale report published in May 2010 states that there is evidence that the number of playing fields has reduced from 26,000 in 1992 to 20,000 in 2009.
- 4.3 The Challenge aims to safeguard hundreds of playing fields in perpetuity for future generations in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee and as a permanent tribute to Queen Elizabeth.
- 4.4 At present, Fields in Trust (FIT), previously known as the National Playing Fields Association (NPFSA), currently protects 1,271 fields. Many of these are already dedicated to specific people or purposes, notably the King George V Memorial Playing Fields, which were established as a memorial to the late Monarch after his death in 1936. Nationwide there are 471 KGV playing fields and there are two such sites within Inverclyde, at Parklea, Port Glasgow, which is still in use and currently being refurbished and Wellington Park, Greenock, where the playing fields are now no longer in use.

## **5.0 PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 FIT has asked each Local Authority throughout the United Kingdom to nominate a number of playing fields in their area that they would be happy to protect as a Queen Elizabeth Field. They will then publicise the nominations by putting these playing fields forward to a vote allowing the general public to vote for their favourite local playing field to be protected. The Council may however choose to protect all the playing fields they nominate if they so wish.
- 5.2 It is hoped that the public will be excited by the chance to be involved in creating a permanent and tangible legacy to benefit their community both now and in the future and that Local Authorities will see the benefits that protecting these spaces will have e.g. in addressing some of the key agendas around increasing physical activity, promoting social cohesion and improving the environment in a long-lasting way for their communities.
- 5.3 There will also be an opportunity for sports clubs, recreational charities, voluntary bodies or private landowners, who might want to get involved with the initiative, to submit individual fields to the scheme providing they meet the set criteria.
- 5.4 Sites to be afforded protection need to satisfy the following criteria if they are to be accepted into The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge .The criteria are:
  - Evidence of title permitting site use for outdoor, sport, play and/or recreation must be produced;
  - Sites may be provided with facilities and equipment or used as general open space, and established for that purpose by way of planning requirements;
  - Each site's principal use should be outdoor sport, play and/or recreation, though FIT wants to be flexible and in this context dedications also including indoor leisure facilities, village halls or other buildings enabling community recreation will be considered;
  - The minimum acceptable size is 0.2 hectare (0.5 acre);
  - Sites need to be accessible in terms of location;
  - Sites need to be accessible in terms of affordability for the community concerned;
  - Sites should be open to the public, and established charitably or, as facilities held by a sports club under the Community Amateur Sports Club regime or held as Public Open Space;

- All sites will need local managers, who will be responsible for the quality of facilities, their maintenance and development, improving participation and use, and financial and operational sustainability; and
- Compliance with existing legislation relating to sport, play or open space.

5.5 The public will vote for their favourite local playing field via the internet. All playing fields nominated by Local Authorities will be uploaded to the site so that people can search for their area and cast a vote for the field they would like to be protected as a Queen Elizabeth Field. It is also intended to provide a mechanism to enable the public to cast votes by phone and text. Voting will commence in late 2011.

5.6 In respect of the legal process, FIT proposes to agree a Minute of Agreement with the Council to govern joint commitments to matters relating to the nominated sites. When the actual sites have been selected following the community voting process, each site will be made subject to a deed of dedication safeguarding it in the longer term. The objective is to protect sites in perpetuity but in special circumstances they would consider protecting a site for a fixed period of time, but not normally less than 100 years. A model Minute of Agreement supplied by FIT was considered by officers and found to be unsuitable. Legal Services also recommended against acceptance of it in its current form.

5.7 FIT has developed a number of options to suit all landowners. These include:-

- protection in perpetuity or for a fixed time period – 100 years.
- establishing the site on charitable trusts or protecting it as a non-charitable site.
- protecting the land for general open space purposes, specifically for sport or games or for outdoor and indoor recreational purposes, depending on present and foreseen use.

## **6.0 NOMINATED PLAYING FIELDS**

6.1 It would not be appropriate to nominate sites that are associated with an already existing attribution e.g. King George V Memorial Playing Fields, Coronation Park, Birkmyre Park, Darroch Park etc.

6.2 The Inverclyde Council sites recommended for inclusion in The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge are:

- Battery Park;
- George Road Playing Fields; and
- Ravenscraig Playing Field and Athletics Track.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Financial

None. All 3 nominated sites are already maintained by Inverclyde Council and inclusion in The Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge does not require any change to current use or maintenance regimes.

7.2 Legal

In order to formalise the process the Council and FIT will require entering into a legally binding agreement, a Minute of Agreement. The model Minute of Agreement submitted by FIT for consideration was reviewed by Legal Services and they recommended against acceptance of it in its current form. It is therefore proposed to negotiate a revised agreement that is suitable to both parties.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 The organisation Fields in Trust was consulted on the contents of this report.