

New pitch opened at Meadowbank



A new pitch was formally opened at Meadowbank Sports Centre yesterday, with the local MSP, Kenny MacAskill and Councillor Richard Lewis, Culture Convenor on hand for a bit of football practice with some young Leith Athletic players.

The pitch was paid for by £300,000 from the Scottish Government Cashback for Communities programme and the balance by The City of Edinburgh Council. Cashback for Communities uses monies recovered from proceeds of crime in local communities.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said: “I am delighted to have the opportunity to open the new state of the art facilities here at Meadowbank. It’s fantastic to see first-hand how money seized from criminals has been invested in quality facilities the length and breadth of the country. These will undoubtedly boost the development of grass roots football and rugby in Scotland whilst also offering local communities opportunities to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles.

“CashBack is helping more people than ever before and since 2007, a massive £50 million has been invested. This cash has directly benefited over 600,000 young people and generated over 11,000 volunteers from different backgrounds who are now putting something back into their communities across Scotland.

“By using money taken from those who have caused misery through their illegal activities means we can invest in our young people and make communities safer for the future as well

as hitting criminals where it hurts – their pockets.”

Leith Athletic FC successfully bid to become the venue’s ‘home club’, allowing them priority access to the pitch at pre-arranged times. The selection panel, comprising the SFA, the Council and Edinburgh Leisure, was impressed by the Club’s community focus and commitment to developing young players of both sexes.

Cllr Richard Lewis, Culture & Sport Convener, City of Edinburgh Council, said: “We have pledged to support and invest in the City’s sporting infrastructure and I am pleased that, through this partnership with the Scottish Government, we have been able to improve the quality and flexibility of the facilities on offer at Meadowbank.

“I would like to congratulate Leith Athletic on their successful bid, which I understand was very strong, and look forward to the benefits this arrangement will bring to the club and to the local community.”

Edinburgh Leisure will work with the SFA and Leith Athletic to deliver a Midnight League for local young people and, as before, will manage pitch bookings for other users during the remainder of the week. Thanks to its larger size, the new surface will also now be suitable for rugby training.

Edinburgh Leisure Chief Executive, John Comiskey, said: “This excellent new 3G facility will provide an improved experience for our customers on a consistent playing surface, helping to combat the unreliable Scottish weather which has affected so many games on grass pitches this year. The larger playing area will also allow more flexibility for pitch layouts and help us to encourage more people to be more active throughout the year.”

Stewart Harris, Chief Executive of **sportscotland**, said: “**sportscotland** is delighted to have worked in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council to further improve the facilities on

offer at Meadowbank Sports Centre.

“The £300,000 of CashBack funding towards this project has helped deliver a high-spec, flexible pitch, which will not only provide a new home for Leith Athletic FC, but will undoubtedly be a real asset to the community as a whole.

“**sport**scotland is committed to investing in quality facilities as part of its drive towards developing a world-class sporting system at all levels and the addition of the 3G pitch at Meadowbank certainly supports that aim by widening the sporting opportunities throughout the area and helping to increase the number of children involved in sport and physical activity.”