

Balerno to get new 3G pitch

Christmas is coming early for young people across Scotland including those living in Balerno following a £1.43m boost from the Scottish Government's Cashback for Communities to build a new, full-sized 3G pitch there.

The fund will provide money seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act for synthetic turf rugby and football pitches at five venues across Scotland, and one of those earmarked for a new pitch is Malleny Park in Balerno.

Priority has been given to bids for pitches with projects working with young people in areas that experience antisocial behaviour and crime.

This is the first wave of funding allocations from a pot of £3.15 million; the next wave will be announced in the new year. The cash comprises £2 million from the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities programme, coupled with £1 million from sportscotland and £150,000 from WREN.

The CashBack funding has come from a £5.6 million payment from Aberdeen-based oil and gas company Abbot Group after the firm used the Crown Office's self-reporting initiative to admit benefitting from corrupt payments made in an overseas deal.

Applications for funding were invited from partnerships between local authorities and local football and rugby clubs. The successful applicants and locations are:

- Aberdeen City Council at Central Park, Dyce Academy Playing Field, Dyce, Aberdeen (£300,000)
- Stonehaven Community Group at Mineralwell Park, Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire (£280,000)
- City of Edinburgh Council at Malleny Park, Balerno,

Edinburgh (£300,000 including £50,000 WREN funding)

- Strathaven Rugby Football Club at Whiteshawgate Park, Strathaven, South Lanarkshire (£300,000)
- Dalziel High School Memorial Trust at Dalziel Park, Motherwell, North Lanarkshire (£250,000 including £50,000 WREN funding)

At a visit to Malleny Park with pupils from Balerno High School , Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

“Today’s announcement is a perfect example of how criminal money can be seized and used for good to make communities richer places to live.

“These pitches will allow young people to access facilities that keep them out of trouble and encourage them to lead healthy and happy lives. The fact these pitches can be used for both football and rugby all year round means we are encouraging the next generation of sportsmen and women to develop their full potential.

“This government has now redistributed more than £50 million in criminal money to good causes through this unique Scottish programme, with dozens of CashBack-funded sports facilities now in place across Scotland to provide a tangible legacy that communities can use and enjoy for years to come.”

Stewart Harris, Chief Executive of sportscotland, said:

“At sportscotland we firmly believe in the power of sport to change lives and transform communities. That is why we have made an additional £1 million of funding available to complement Cashback support for projects such as the five announced today.

“sportscotland is committed to investing in quality facilities as part of its drive towards developing a world-class sporting

system at all levels. Increasing and improving the opportunities for people to become involved in sport and physical activity locally is right at the heart of that commitment and it's fantastic to see more communities across Scotland set to benefit as a result of this funding."

Cameron Watt, the Scottish Football Association's Facilities Manager said, "Firstly we wish to thank the Scottish Government for another significant investment in facilities that is sure to have a tremendous impact on the successful applicant clubs and their players.

We've enjoyed working together with our partners at sportscotland and Scottish Rugby to identify projects that will deliver facilities for both sports. As a result both football and rugby will enjoy over £3m of investment as opposed to simply splitting the pot in half and delivering for each sport separately. CashBack for Pitches has been a fine example of partnership between the Scottish FA, Scottish Rugby and Scotland's national agency for sport."

Director of Operations for Scottish Rugby, Colin Thomson, added:

"Today we're launching five projects that will result in 3G football and rugby pitches being established in communities across Scotland.

"We have already seen the benefits of 3G pitches with countless numbers of rugby participants, from schools and clubs, taking part in activities at Scotstoun prior to Glasgow Warriors matches and on our own 3G pitch at Murrayfield before Edinburgh Rugby games. These are fantastic surfaces that help develop the skills necessary to enjoy participation in our great sport.

"Today's announcement is a great example of what rugby and football clubs can achieve when they work together with other partners with the common goal of improving facilities, to

increase opportunities for youngsters in sport.”