

Title of Report:	NIFF Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund 2026-27
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 October 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Stable and Cohesive Communities
Lead Officer	Head of Funding Unit

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	TBC

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	TBC (60% Funded)
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	
Staffing Costs	£3,000 (15 days of existing staff time, averaged at £200 per day)

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	No
Legal Opinion Obtained	No

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:		Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:		Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed		Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:		Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:		Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:		Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is inform members that the Parker Avenue Project application to the Department for Communities Northern Ireland Football Fund Pilot Grassroots Facilities Programme has been successful and to request that Council accept the offer and progress to the next stage of the DfC process.

2.0 Background

In March 2026 the L&D Committee agreed to the submission of a funding application to the IFA Grassroots Community Facilities fund for a new artificial grass pitch at Parker Avenue Portrush. This fund was for projects which could be completed by March 2027. Officers received notification May 2026 that the application was unsuccessful due to planning permission not being in place.

In May 2026 officers identified an alternative funding opportunity for the project and submitted an application to the Department for Communities Northern Ireland Football Fund (NIFF) Pilot Grassroots Facilities Programme. The application requested £850,000 towards the cost of floodlighting and a new artificial grass pitch at Parker Avenue Recreation Grounds in Portrush.

2.1 Objectives of the fund

The main objectives of the NIFF Pilot Grassroots Facilities Programme include:

- increase the availability of facilities to support current and future participation, especially for women and girls
- improve accessibility of facilities for disabled users
- upgrade and enhance the facility to develop a safe, inclusive and attractive venue
- provide an insight into the diversity of need across the grassroots sector, gaining an understanding of demand and assessing the capacity of applicants to deliver projects effectively

3.0 Eligibility

Unlike the IFA Grassroots Community Facilities Fund, Planning Permission was not an eligibility criteria for the NIFF Programme.

Councils were able to apply under Stream 2 of the fund:

A council which is the Owner of a Grassroots Football Facility to which the application relates in partnership with a Grassroots Football Club (affiliated to the Irish Football Association).

3.0 Project Costs

At the time of application total project costs of £1,428,842.70 were established through a detailed and professionally prepared cost planning process. These costs reflect the delivery of a full-size 3G pitch and upgraded floodlighting at Parker Avenue Recreation Ground.

The cost comprises two key elements:

- o Core pitch construction and associated works: £1,269,377
- o Floodlighting installation (6 columns and associated infrastructure):
£159,465.60

Applicants could request up to 60% of project costs. £850,000 was requested.

4.0 Funding Decision

On 30 September 2026 Council received notification that the project ranked second in the Stream 2 applications and is one of two successful Councils to be taken forward to the due diligence stage. The Department for Communities will now carry out due diligence checks to provide legal and feasibility assurances.

Following completion of the preliminary legal due diligence and the feasibility due diligence checks to the satisfaction of the Department, Council will be eligible to receive a Grant Funding Agreement. The date will be determined by the Department and confirmed to Council in the Grant Funding Agreement.

8.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure & Development Committee recommends to full Council:

- Acceptance of the offer from the Department for Communities NIFF Grassroots Facilities Fund for floodlighting and a new artificial grass pitch at Parker Avenue, Portrush.
- Progression of the project to stage 2 of Council's capital project stage.