**Padel Tennis Questions – January 2022**

**Question 1**

Are the Padel courts fully enclosed or are the sides exposed (like Thistle)? The drawings look as If the mesh sections at the side are exposed – this would mean wind and rain would blow through and also that car lights would shine through the glass at night/in the winter when entering/exiting the car park? I’m concerned if not enclosed, that our offering may be inferior to other pending projects (Rutherglen & Lethamhill) and would potentially significantly reduce the attractiveness of Newlands for Winter bookings as it will essentially be playing outdoors in the cold and potentially be a bit wet and windy.

We are still in discussion with the contractor on detailed design and costs so a final decision would not be made until after the outcome of the EGM. The canopy at Thistle has sides that extend fully down to the ground and completely enclose the long elevations. During covid this side curtain was left open to improve ventilation but it can be lowered (seasonally rather than daily) and this blocks out wind and driving rain and would also provide cover from any car lights.

The final curtain arrangement is dependent on the canopy supplier but it can be sliding or raise/lower and provides the protection that you have outlined.

The outcome will be an unheated but wind and rain free court environment that can be used throughout the year. This is very similar to the Game4Padel design at Lethamhill.

**Question 2**

The outdoor tennis courts are in poor condition and (very) near end of life, so I’m pleased to hear these will be replaced within the next 4 years. Is the court replacement (and other maintenance work mentioned) dependant on the success of Padel ie does Padel need to generate a surplus on the c£32k pa (£227.5k/7) loan repayments to make this feasible? If yes, what is the required annual surplus to deliver these projects?

Success of Padel is not necessary for the outdoor court surface replacement at all. Forecasting has been based on two separate financial models - one for the club as it exists now and the other a distinct financial model for the Padel Tennis.

It is better this way rather than lose visibility if both of the above were incorporated within one financial model?  The cash flow includes a spend estimate of £80k in May/June 2023 for re-acrylicing the indoor courts (not sure if this is definitely necessary at that time but better to include something).  There is a further squash court flooring spend of £20k in May 2024.  I have anticipated that the outdoor courts will be re-surfaced during March 2025 at an estimate spend of £100k.

**Question 3**

Indoors tennis fees were £28k in the last financial year (not sure about the year to Sept-21?) for 4 courts at the same cost per hour to members – what’s the assumed annual revenue from the 2 Padel courts?

Firstly, re the indoor tennis fees - year to 30 Sep 2019 was £38.5k, year to 30 Sep 2020 was £28.0k, year to 30 Sep 2021 is £17.1k. The forecast year to 30 Sep 2022 is £37.3k

Remember mainly the year to 30 Sep 2021 was severely hit with Covid restrictions.  On the face of it, it might look that the forecast for year to Sep 2022 looks too optimistic.  However, I can comment that indoor court fees for the three months to 31 Dec 2021 looks to be approx. £17k and I would expect the £37.3k to be exceeded.

Padel booking fees are forecast: 2 months to 30 Sep 2022 - £6k, year to 30 Sep 2023 - £36k and year to 30 Sep 2024 - £36k

Fees have been based on a very conservative 37.7% utilisation with a mix of members and non-members.  Non-members usage at 4 hours per week.  I do believe at 37.7% utilisation I am overly prudent but don't wish to have a too optimistic view.  The non-member fee was based on £24, including VAT.  More likely this will be at £28, including VAT.

Cannot make a comparison between the indoor tennis courts and Padel courts income as indoor tennis usage drops dramatically in the summer, etc.  Coaches pay a rate of only £5 per hour.

Also built in as **a direct result** of Padel introduction is that we shall gain an additional 20 senior and 20 restricted playing members by mid-2023.  This is over and above the existing membership forecasts where I build in the usual churn when it comes to renewal time.

Just to give you some other comfort subs income for year to 30 Sep 2021 is £213k. I expect subs figure for 6 months to 31 Mar 2022 to be in excess of £130k which is also ahead of forecast.

**Question 4**

The Padel courts will be bookable by non-members. Will the non-members therefore have access to the club premises and other facilities such as changing rooms and bar areas or will the Padel courts be a standalone entity accessed directly from outdoors using a pass code?

We currently allow guests and non-members to use our facilities when playing squash or tennis. We don’t anticipate changing this however it will be possible to access the Padel courts without entering the club due to online booking and issue of a code to access the court. I would also point out that many members arrive dressed for play and do not use the changing rooms.

**Question 5**

Are there any future plans to upgrade the ventilation systems in the shower/changing room areas and in the gym?

We have no plans at present for ventilation in the changing rooms or the gym. New changing rooms are on our capital expenditure plan and were looked at a year ago. The expense made that project unviable at the level of refurbishment we think is required.

**Question 6**

Knowing how popular Padel will become with the over 45s and knowing what the demographic of NLTC is, why will we build two courts in the carpark knowing that in the future we will inevitably build more to cater for the growing market for Padel?

Having said this, would it be a better spend by ensuring we build a Padel Hub, over time, where all Padel Courts are located together and not built hotch-potch all over the NLTC Estate?  We didn't with Squash all over the estate, and we haven't with Tennis.

Would it not be more prudent Estate Planning to build on the existing Mini Courts area up to the existing gym, or even taking the gym away, knowing that if the take up is a successful as we know from other Tennis to Padel convert clubs, we can easily then convert Tennis Courts 1 and 2 into Padel Courts venues and maintain a Padel Hub with a Central Socialising area much the same as in the Squash Hall?

The club could then look to re position the existing **gym** into the upstairs, perhaps in the vacant bar corridor area that is not yet developed.

Could we then also reposition the **Mini Courts** along the fence line on the back of Courts 3/4/5/6 and erect double skin shade cloth to avoid distraction. Whitecraigs, Strathgryffe, and others I am sure, have back-to-back courts and happily coexist. At the same time the courts would benefit from having light from the existing flood lights should they need to be used in dark hours.

We have been through this 3 to 4 years ago when we put the first Padel proposal to the members at an EGM. We were asked to look at putting two Padel courts side by side on the existing mini courts. (The mini courts would have been rebuilt at the back of the beer garden where the barbecue was situated.) This was rejected for three reasons:

1. the outcry from the tennis members at moving the mini courts

2. the two Padel courts were too close together.

3. the clinching reason! We would have had to build right over the drainage system which had been installed after the indoor tennis courts flooded. Bill Laird would turn in his grave if we did that!

We did look via google maps to look at the best area to put the courts. I might add that the tennis courts, indoor tennis courts and squash hall were all built long before Padel was a viable sport in the UK. Therefore "estate planning" for Padel tennis is in my view wishful thinking!

Laying of two mini tennis courts was part of the conditions of the existing LTA interest free loan and the LTA would refuse new funding if we were to reduce our facilities by removing the mini courts and/or if we intended to convert outdoor tennis courts one and two into Padel courts.  LTA funding is normally to enhance club facilities linked with an impact of increased participants. Additionally, the club does not have unlimited cash resources and we have to work within our means and not expose the club by over-extending ourselves.

**Question 7**

Advertising and Sponsorship - Will provision be made for Advertising and Sponsorship on the glass backs and that of the outside?

This is ongoing and we have had a good response due to the efforts of Gordon Kent.

**Question 8**

The Cage Design - Will provision on the outside of the court be made to reduce the volume of rain from getting onto certain areas of the court, in particular the open cage areas, that would then be predominately wet and to that of the rest of the court dry? Will there be a rest and change area for Visitors?

We have taken this into account. See reply to question 1.

**Question 9**

Bollards - Will there be provision on the outside of the courts of Bollards to stop vehicles from damaging the cage and the court?

This has been taken into account.

**Question 10**

Improved Outside Car Park Lighting - Will there be a need for improved carpark lighting in and around the Padel Cages to reduce the potential of accidents and damage to the courts?

We have not considered this as the lights on the courts should be sufficient. However, if it is deemed a problem, we will deal with it.

**Question 11**

Visitor Considerations - Toilets - Will Visitors have access to toilet and showers in the main clubhouse? If not, what toilet provision will we need to offer? Will they have access to a water fountain? Will they have access to the car park? Will they have access to the existing bike rack? Will they have access to the bar facility?

We currently allow all guests and non-members to use the facilities you mention. However, this can be given further consideration.

**Question 12**

Club Insurances - Will we need to adjust our Insurances for the Estate and for Accident and Liability for both Members and Visitors?

We have spoken to the club’s insurers and an insurance charge has been incorporated into our financial model for Padel expenditure.  The club's EL/PL insurances are covered under the LTA's umbrella insurances for registered venues.

**Question 13**

Vandalism - What provision do we need to have in place to reduce the likelihood of vandalism to the courts either to, the glass backs, the cage and the roof?  Knowing that where the courts are to be placed, we have limited fence provision in that area and will be vulnerable either from the Primary school path or from the carpark?

We are looking at a double wall to prevent the courts being attacked.

**Question 14**

Maintenance - What ongoing provisions will be needed for maintaining the courts? Court dragging, sand replacement, LED light replacement, accessfor Cherry Picker to replace lights, fix roof, remove balls stuck in roof, cobwebs etc?

Your queries are the same as what is already done for the rest of the club so it will just be extended.

**Question 15**

Membership / Subscription - Would we be able to offer a Add on Subs Option to existing Membership fees alongside a Pay to Play option as well? Similar to what we have for the gym? What possible Subs Costs could those be?

The present proposal is that there will be no increase in subscriptions other than an inflationary increase. The reason for this is that not everyone will want to play Padel.

The charge for members will be similar to the charge for the indoor tennis courts. Non-members will pay a great deal more. See reply to question 3.

**Question 16**

Impact of Vehicle Headlights - Will provision be made for in the design of the cages for the impact of Vehicle Headlights passing the courts?  With the sides open and vehicles passing all the time in the winter months with lights I am sure it will prove to be a distraction.

The curtain will provide cover from car headlights.

**Question 17**

Impact to Refurb of Existing Tennis Court Estate - What financial and duration impact will this have on the refurbishment of the existing outdoor and indoor Tennis Court estate?  When are we due to refurb the outdoor tennis courts? When are we due to refurb the indoor tennis courts?

As you will know we recently rejuvenated the outside courts so that we could delay the replacement until March 2025 at a cost of £100k. The indoor courts are to be refurbished at an estimated cost of £80k in May/June2023. Squash court flooring circa £20k in May 2024. We are very aware that these refurbishments have to be done and have been taken into account when putting forward our financial model to the Lawn Tennis Association.

**Question 18**

Impact to Indoor Court Utilisation (Tennis & Squash) - Has any modelling been done of the possible drop in Court utilisation of tennis, both indoor and outdoor, and the squash courts for both squash and racketball?

We have done no detailed modelling on this.   Financial projections do not include any significant change to the income generated from the indoor tennis courts presently.  Past experience tells us that previous developments have increased membership and utilisation of all facilities.  From speaking to Thistle and Edinburgh Sports Club who have installed Padel courts they have both experienced an increase in profitability and usage.

**Question 19**

Padel & Ball Availability - Will provision be made for the Padel Section buying Padel rackets for players to use and to support participation both with existing NLTC Members and future Visitors? West of Scotland offer this facility.

We would anticipate selling Padel equipment and balls from reception. We may also hire equipment.

**Question 20**

Padel Committee- Who will form the new Padel Section Committee to drive up participation both within the Club and for Leagues, rules, scoring formats, etc?

Help! We haven't got a court yet!  There is no reason why we would not have a Padel committee as we do for squash and tennis.

**Question 21**

Padel Coaching- Will we be considering a Padel Coach in order to drive up participation of both Junior and Senior players?  Will this be through Steel Tennis or will we need a new model to support this?

No decision made yet but discussion ongoing with Steel Tennis and Matt Bedwell our squash coach. Early days for a full-time coach. There are also a number of coaches in Edinburgh who may be prepared to travel.

**Question 22**

No Spitting Rule - We need to ensure a No Spitting Rule is known and adhered too. Often the idea of being 'outside' means players may feel it's ok to spit.

I think we will take your advice on that one!

**Shame we didn’t buy the Bowling Club!**

I agree with you re the purchase of the bowling club- I would love to have done it! However sometimes you can't let your heart rule your head!  A purchase of £300k plus development costs of millions would have put the club in a financial straight jacket for decades. There is also a point to be made that sometimes you can get to be too big.

**Question 23**

What booking system will you use? I presume we will use the booking system that forces you to put in all 4 names (ie members or non members) to ensure all fees are collected?

The booking and door access system to the Padel courts will be a “smart gate” software system and not through our MyCourts platform. It will require 4 names.

**NLTC Padel Committee**