



## Yeovil & Sherborne Hockey Club



ENGLAND  
HOCKEY



### Renewed 10 Year Community Use Agreement

Hockey has faced great pressure with publicly-owned multi-use pitches around the country being lost to football only '3G' surfaces (only '2G' pitches are approved by the International Hockey Federation; '3G' pitches are only suitable for football and rugby).

Yeovil & Sherborne Hockey Club based on the Somerset and Dorset border has forged strong links with Somerset Council (formerly South Somerset District Council). The club's home pitch in Yeovil is an example of how working together in a partnership brings dividends to all parties.

In 2023, at the end of the tenth season playing hockey on the Artificial Surface at Yeovil Recreation Centre in Yeovil, Somerset, the Club signed a new 10-year Community Use Agreement with South Somerset District Council and England Hockey. Since then, a unitary authority has been created and South Somerset District Council has been subsumed within the new Somerset Council.

The Club is an amalgam of 3 hockey clubs: Yeovil, Sherborne and Westlands Ladies. Yeovil and Sherborne hockey clubs merged in 1972 and Westlands Ladies joined in 1994. The club badge represents: Yeovil (the gloves), Sherborne (the castle), and hockey (a ball).

The Club has played at a wide variety of venues over the years including The Terraces (in Sherborne), and gravel pitches (in Yeovil) at Yeovil College and Bucklers Mead School before the Club spent some time benefitting from having one of the first artificial pitches in the region at Huish Park (Yeovil Town Football Club) as its home venue. The Club had to leave Huish Park in 2002 when the pitch was considered no longer safe to play competitive hockey on. There were no other artificial pitches in Yeovil so the Club's home matches moved to Sherborne where they were played firstly at Sherborne Girls School and then The Gryphon School before moving back to Yeovil in 2013 when the new artificial pitch at YRC was opened.

Originally destined to be part of the £22 million 'Sport Zone' project at the Recreation Centre, the new pitch was created as a standalone facility when the wider project was cancelled. Realising that a new sand-based multi-use artificial pitch met a great deal of the shortfall in the provision of sports pitches in the area, the Council built the new pitch alongside the existing athletics arena with funding from England Hockey, Barratt Homes - who had recently completed a development in the town – along with earmarked improvement funds from the Council. Supported by the hockey club from the outset, this was earmarked from the beginning to be the club's new home venue.

*"England Hockey recognises the renewed commitment by South Somerset District Council [now Somerset Council] to support community club hockey at Yeovil Recreation Centre with a newly signed Community Use Agreement. The agreement secures Yeovil & Sherborne HC future within the Town and highlights the commitment by both parties to continue to provide a quality facility, both on and off the pitch with the new social provision, for all users to enjoy. England Hockey values the support from Somerset Council in protecting and improving the facility for hockey, creating a place where the club can thrive, and hockey can grow."*

**Joanna Hawley, Facilities Development Manager, England Hockey**

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Mindful of the club's previous experience struggling with a rapidly deteriorating, poorly maintained playing surface, it was requested that a 'sink fund' be set-up to put aside funds for any future need such as repairs, replacement equipment and eventually carpet replacement. Involved from early on in the design stage, the club was also able to request that full 3 metre run-offs be incorporated all round and that permanent blockwork dugouts for players and officials be constructed. This was readily agreed to as part of the Community Use Agreement, and with use of the first-class on-site changing facilities, the club moved back to Yeovil and settled down to play hockey.

Roll-on six years and the Council put in plans to convert a number of the under-used, surplus changing rooms in the large on-site pavilion to a café and create a multi-use room for the local community. Again, from the start the Council approached the club to seek support and offer the multi-use room for use as a club house on match days and for coaching/umpiring courses as well as tournaments.

*"SSDC [now Somerset Council] are delighted to be renewing the Community Use Agreement with Yeovil and Sherborne Hockey Club for facility use at Yeovil Recreation Centre. Since the construction of the AGP the Club have become an anchor tenant at the recreation ground, providing stability to the facility and demonstrating delivery of high quality club sport. Having survived the recent years of Covid19 we are particularly pleased to embark on a new chapter with the Club, confirming access to new inside club facilities to enhance the offer of the Club and the overall viability of the multi-sport facility. As we become Somerset Council in April 2023 we look forward to continuing the relationship and supporting achievement and engagement with hockey."*

**Katy Menday, Leisure and Recreation Manager, Somerset Council**

Previously post-match hospitality has been at a multitude of venues over the years including pub's in Sherborne and Yeovil, as well as Johnson Park Sports Club (Yeovil), and Yeovil Town Football Club, so the opportunity to remain at Yeovil Recreation Centre for post-match refreshments and not have to relocate by car to another venue (and all the issues that brings) was seized upon.

In return for this the Council asked if the Club would be able to contribute to funding the building work. Conscious that the provision of a club house, or club house facilities, would complete the hockey facilities and have the potential to create a hockey centre for South Somerset/North Dorset, the Club had been setting aside funds and tentatively making plans ever since returning to Yeovil. In the end, rather than contributing to the building work the Club paid for additional catering equipment needed in the café and furniture for the multi-use community room.

*"I was delighted to be able to sign the Community Use Agreement on the behalf of the Club. Having enjoyed playing hockey at Yeovil Recreation Centre - and the unwavering support of the Council - for the last 10 years, the recent further development of the facilities will help to further establish it as a hockey centre. The Council has always been forward thinking; rarely waiting for us to ask, the proactive staff offer proposals and solutions to problems and issues. As a Club we find ourselves 'pushing at an open door' when it comes to the management and development of the facilities. Committing to the Agreement means that all parties can now work together to further improve the facilities and the hockey 'offer', particularly for state school students. Furthermore, we can (collectively) start to plan the inevitably refurbishment of the pitch."*

**Barrie Izard, Chair, Yeovil & Sherborne Hockey Club**

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The works were completed in the Summer of 2021 and the Club was able to use the multi-use community room as a club house in which to entertain visiting teams and umpires at the pitch venue for the first time during the 2021/22 season. In the same pavilion building as the changing facilities the club house also has access to the café, which itself is particularly well patronised by parents when junior hockey training is taking place before senior matches on Saturdays and for Sunday tournaments.

The Club (<https://yshc.co.uk>) uses the Yeovil Recreation Centre (<https://www.yeovilrec.co.uk/>) pitch on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings during the Winter for training, and on Saturdays for senior league matches, as well as Sundays for special events, such as hosting county and regional tournaments. During the Summer hockey is played on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and this Summer the Club hosted a 3 day Grand Masters weekend for the first time as a major test event.

And what of the threat of non-hockey '3G' football pitches? Well, there are already three in existence at Huish Park (Yeovil Town FC), and Westfield and Bucklers Mead Schools, and a fourth proposed at Preston School, so it looks as if, through foresight and planning, any risk is non-existence. In addition, the Yeovil & Sherborne Hockey Club enjoys, and actively cultivates, excellent relations with schools in Sherborne, and with it occasional access to the four hockey pitches there, including the new indoor pitch facility at Sherborne School.