**Policy: Use of artificial grass on Council owned/ managed land**

The Council is one of the largest landowners in the County Borough and is fortunate to be home to many parks, gardens and recreational areas. We recognise that activities within our green open spaces can have a significant impact on the local environment.

Artificial grass has become increasingly popular in recent years, due to the perceived notion that it is easier to maintain. Artificial grass is made of plastic and although it doesn’t require mowing, it does require regular cleaning and only has a life span of 8 to 15 years, after which it is not currently possible to dispose of it sustainably. Using the latest estimates, an artificial lawn of 60sqm for an average urban garden will create about 435kg CO2e of greenhouse gas emissions through the plastic manufacturing process. Research has also shown that artificial grass has negative impacts on biodiversity, e.g. by reducing foraging opportunities for wild birds, as well as leaching micro-plastics into the environment. Artificial grass also reaches significantly greater temperatures than those reached by natural grass under the same weather conditions, contributing to the urban heat island effect.

Neath Port Talbot Council has a legal duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. We are also seeking to ‘decarbonise’ the county borough, by minimising the emission of greenhouse gases. Considering the above information about artificial grass, and these duties and responsibilities, the unnecessary use of artificial grass should be prevented.

The Authority doesn’t currently use artificial grass on its public estate, with the exception of some high-performance sports pitches. In implementing this policy, this Council will:

* Prevent the installation of artificial grass on any Council owned or controlled land.

An exception to this policy is when artificial grass is required for high-performance sports pitches or play areas, which may be rendered unusable without it.

This policy is intended to cover future installations of artificial grass post-adoption of the policy. There may be Council owned or managed sites where artificial grass has been installed prior to the adoption of this policy. While this policy applies to all Council owned or managed properties, please note that management control over leased properties may be limited. As a result, the policy may not be fully enforceable in these locations.

This policy and its implementation will be monitored and will be reviewed in light of other Council policies and changing legislation as required.