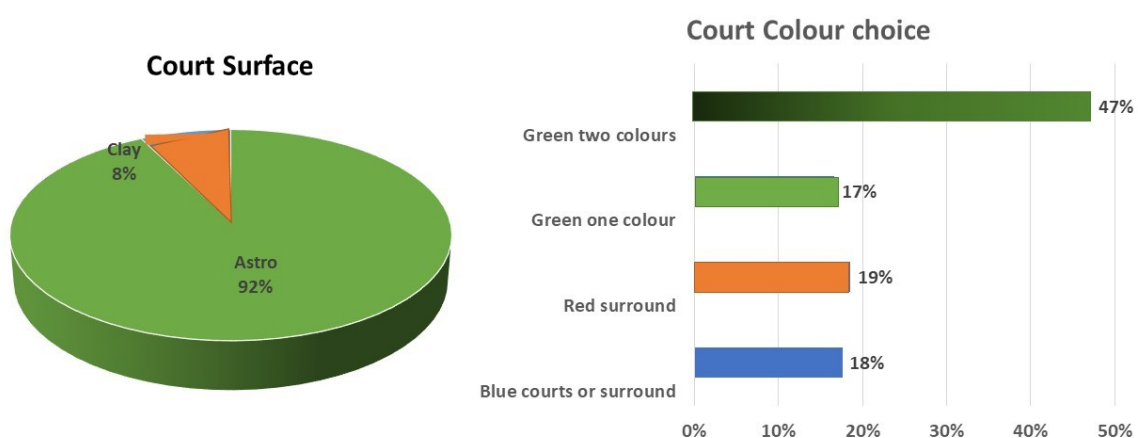


Results of the Members' Court Refurbishment Survey

Thank you to your responses to the recent survey regarding the refurbishment of Courts 1-5 at SSLTC. Here are the results and the next steps.

Results

In total we had 54% responding. The results were overwhelming in favour of replacing our Astro courts with a similar type of surface. The colour choice was also pretty skewed to as natural a look as possible, with 64% wanting green, the majority of which (47%) wanted two tone green.



Some responses to your comments

Thank you for all your comments and suggestions. Here are some responses to some of the more common themes.

Could Tiger Turf be an option? Any chance of the 4g football pitch type? Are proper clay courts an option? (Artificial) Clay is the surface for the future generation of tennis players with Tiger Turf the next best option for courts 1-5. Most London clubs play on hard court, why is that not suitable?

- A. We are or have certainly considered all options. Of the Astro turf options, Tiger Turf certainly seems to be the best available at present, is approved by the worldwide tennis authorities, and it is certainly our intention to get quotes. 4g football pitches are typically a much deeper pile carpet and designed specifically for football. As such they are not suitable for the bounce of a tennis ball and not recommended or approved by the LTA. Proper clay courts are high maintenance, have problematic drainage and as a consequence are a rarity in the UK. With respect to hard courts, we certainly believe a return to the tarmac that used to be on courts 8&9 to be a regressive step and the acrylic hard courts such as those at the US and Australian Open are prone to flooding with just a little rain. I presume you saw the problems at the US recently with flooded courts even with the roof closed!

When the new courts are laid, we should increase the club subscriptions.

- A. The club runs a sinking fund to pay for the replacement of our capital assets such as courts. It is the objective of this committee to contributing to this fund annually from the subscriptions we receive. Despite not having increased the subs for thirteen years, we have managed over the past fifteen years to add two clay courts with an Air Dome and save up enough to pay for the replacement of Courts 1-5, despite the financial impact of the Covid lockdowns. We will of course apply for any grants and loans for which we are eligible. However we are in good shape and as soon as we have replaced courts 1-5 we will start saving to our sinking fund again in preparation for replacing the air dome skin and refurbishing courts 6&7 in the mid-term future. It is not our intention to increase subs for the foreseeable future but of course, one day it will happen.

If possible can we have courts not as fast as the existing 1-5? I like the speed and bounce of Courts 6&7.

- A. We don't believe carpets as fast as 1-5 are currently available and most playing new surfaces will be somewhere in speed between them and courts 6&7. There is the option of 12mm or 15mm carpet with the former being a half-way house and the latter slower than the existing 6&7. 15mm would require considerably more sand to keep the pile upright and is therefore more expensive to maintain. The carpet is a forest of upright threads that are kept upright by the sand infill, protecting it from abrasion. If there is not enough sand the top of the pile folds over forming a barrier to water which struggles to drain away, and courts quickly become unplayable.

Considering we were flooded recently, should we also consider preventing the water getting onto the courts in the future.

- A. The Great Ouse will come up from time to time and we certainly had a close one with the clubhouse in December 2020. This is only the second time our courts have flooded in recent history, the prior occasion being 2007. Unfortunately, flood barriers would be expensive and unlikely to be very effective. Water will find a way around and it is not economic to redo the foundations of all the courts to raise them up even higher. However our courts do recover quickly and the cost of a refurbishment, where we vacuum out all the river mud and replace the sand, is significantly cheaper than prevention.

We should accept expert advice on the type of surface we select and members' advice only on the colour. It may be worth getting a team of testers to visit other clubs to try out the options.

- A. Yes, we certainly are taking expert advice on the court surface with the knowledge of the members' preference secured. Within that generic choice of Astro courts, the replacements will be a surface that is approved by the tennis authorities for club, coaching and tournament play. We will have obtained a least three quotes from suppliers and interviewed a few more picking their brains as we go. Several members have already come forward with the names of clubs where they have recently played on Astro Tiger Turf courts (Roade, Leamington, High Wycombe, Woughton etc). It is certainly our plan to visit a selection of these clubs again as we did when choosing the artificial clay currently on 8&9.

The existing courts have served the club very well and lasted much longer than anticipated. It makes sense to have the same surface again and perhaps have artificial clay when courts 6&7 are replaced.

- A. The overwhelming majority have voted for a similar surface again for Courts 1-5 and with the right professional fitting service and careful maintenance we fully hope to get a similar number of years use. Courts 6&7 would make ideal candidates for artificial clay when they are replaced given that the clay beads can be somewhat contained within the two courts surround. Perhaps 5 astro and 4 clay would be a good balance for the club with its mix of adults and juniors? I'm sure the committee will solicit members views again when the time comes.

I feel green tone courts are more traditional and therefore more sympathetic to the surrounding area/Stony in general. I would not want our courts to look like swimming pools from above, although blue looks good on TV at the US Open.

- A. Two tone green got nearly half of the vote so we will obtain quotes for this option. Based on our initial discussions with suppliers, colour or two colours is not a cost driver, so selecting two tones of green will be no more or less expensive than the alternatives.

Next Steps

1. With the support of the majority, the committee will now seek firm quotes for two tone green Astro, which almost certainly will be for Tiger Turf based on the expert advice received so far.
2. In parallel we will visit clubs to try out examples, including hopefully both 12 and 15mm carpets. If you would like to be involved with this, or have connections to clubs with our preferred surface, please let us know.
3. We will attempt to secure some provisional dates for the resurfacing that are the least disruptive to our court usage and that can be supported by the shortlist of suppliers.
4. Expenditure of this size (circa £90,000) will require the approval of an AGM or EGM. Depending on the fitting dates we will either seek approval at next April's AGM or arrange a special EGM if things move along quicker than expected.
5. Difficult to put an absolute timeframe on the work, but we would hope to have it completed within 15 months.

Thank you.

SSLTC Committee