

Pétanque in Council plans & strategies



The case for Pétanque in a corporate strategy for parks/green spaces/open spaces/outdoor sports

1. What is Pétanque?

Part of a family of ball games where a big ball is thrown or rolled towards a small target ball. Boccia is in Paralympics, Pétanque was being considered for 2024 Olympics but didn't make it. The word is a pleasing corruption of old French term *pes tanqués* which means feet anchored. The game is played standing still. No run up is used. Created over 100 years ago in the south of France. Now played world wide. Fédération Internationale de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal is world governing body. There are world championships and regular international fixtures

Commonly called Boules or French bowls.
Played over a short distance of between 6m and 10m.
Played on a rough surface usually gravel topped in the UK.
No specialised clothing/kit required.
No running; no tackling; not a strength game; technique beats brute force.
Women beat men; grandchildren beat grandparents; mixed gender teams.

2. Structure of Pétanque in England

National Governing body is Pétanque England
Recognised by Sport England
Holds national and international competitions
Trains and maintains qualified coaches and umpires
Several thousand players in England; hundreds of affiliated clubs; many more not affiliated.
17 regions organise locally in smaller areas
Runs national teams of men, women, veterans, boys and girls

3. The Yorkshire region

Uses the historical boundaries that have been in place for centuries
13 Pétanque England registered clubs, Over 120 Pétanque England registered players.
Many more clubs and players not registered with national body.
Has a Yorkshire team that takes part in inter-regional events
Has a development function that will advise on the sport and support new projects.

4. Clubs and individuals

Players range from juniors (3 age groups starting with U9s going up to 18) to veterans (55+)

Can be played competitively by older people; over 70 is not uncommon.

Games are often mixed gender

Clubs have from 20 members to 80 members

Individuals are members of more than 1 club

Some individuals don't join a club but play at many venues.

It can be played socially or competitively.

5. Affordability

Very low cost in terms of equipment and clothing. Sensible shoes and a waterproof.

A set of 3 leisure boules can be as low as £10; competition boules cost from £60.

Many clubs have a stock of leisure boules to lend out.

Dedicated players spend more on better boules and accessories.

6. Social, health and associated benefits

An afternoon of Pétanque can mean walking 5,000 steps.

A person will stretch, bend, twist, sit down, stand up, pick up, squat and move for 3 hours.

A full day's competition could be in excess of 10,000 steps.

Teams need to talk to each other during games.

Players need to think their way through a game.

It's a game of strategy and is challenging and thought provoking; It's not just big marbles.

Single players, isolated players, players without regular social contact meet at the club sessions.

Married couples can play the sport together

Inter-generational games work

Friendships are formed which spill over into regular contact.

7. Efficient use of space

A minimum size football pitch is 90m by 45m (4050m²)

A football pitch supports about 22 people (184m² each)

A football pitch needs regular cutting, line marking, nets, flags,

A minimum Pétanque lane is 3m by 12m (36m²)

A Pétanque lane supports 6 people (6m² each). Most clubs have many lanes. 8 lanes is about 300m²

A Pétanque lane needs no maintenance.

A Pétanque terrain can be either small (1-3 lanes), medium (4-7 lanes), or large (8 lanes or more).

Smaller ones spring up in communities with strong local organisation or attached to bowls clubs.

Larger ones tend to appear on council land.

A patch of grass at a leisure centre could be easily converted to a Pétanque playing area.

A disused tennis court of 36m by 18m (648m²) could support a large terrain of 12 or 14 lanes. This size terrain would host a triples competition of 28 teams involving 84 players.

A converted crown green 36m² by 36m² (1,296m²) could have between 24 and 36 lanes depending on design and could host an international competition with over 50 teams and 200 players.

8. Cost and time scale of construction

Building 1 lane can cost £1,000 but the more you build at the same time the lower the cost per lane. 14 lanes on a tennis court would be significantly lower than £14K.
A crown green conversion should cost less than £30K. It depends on the contractors.
The cost of maintenance of a crown green (£5,000 a year) would be recovered within 6 years.

A week would usually be sufficient to create a large terrain.
Light excavation of the area removing organic material
French drain or drainage stones
Crushed limestone or builders scalplings with wooden surrounds to retain material. Light gravel topping
Plans for construction are available.
Terrains built on council land are available for inspection in the region
Council officers and Councillors in the county will testify to the success of these projects.

9. Sustainability and natural materials

Wooden sleepers, limestone, gravel
Grass and/or flowerbeds and park benches are often placed around the playing area
Little or no plastic, cement or steel means no unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions
Survives children riding bikes on it, can be restored to original condition with a light raking.

10. Maintenance costs are low

Club will care for the surface.
Once built these playing areas are virtually maintenance free.
Grass courts or greens could cost thousands a year in maintenance.

11. Uptake from end users is significant.

Experience shows that with a competent organiser marketing the game that it attracts big numbers.
Many will have seen the game in France or Spain and are keen to re-acquaint themselves with it.
Clubs with 50+ members are commonplace.
In a public park there will be plenty of walk bys and people popping in to see what this strange game is.

12. Community groups use the facility.

It's quirky nature intrigues spectators
Community groups use it for away days, social events etc
This generates some income for a club.
It brings more footfall to the facility outside club sessions.

13. The hidden requirements for a successful facility

Toilets, cups of tea, biscuits, parking all make the activity accessible and welcoming
A club house to store equipment - A sports pavilion could be repurposed as a club house.
Shared use of a sport centre indoor facilities would provide all these requirements
A crucial component is an organiser or "animateur" to provide basic coaching and encouragement and nurture a group of keen players into a committee that will establish and manage a sports club.
This club will then run and maintain the facility.
Yorkshire Pétanque will provide this person.

14. Parks, Sports Centres and playing areas experience greater footfall.

More regular footfall means more secure parks.

Most Parks and Sports centres have enough land to create a large terrain.

Cross fertilisation with other sports at the same venue builds networks.

15. Larger terrains attract regional, national or international competitions boosting the local economy.

Heckmondwike in Kirklees holds a competition in July every year with entries from all over Europe and thousands of pounds in prize money and England internationals playing.

A large city centre venue in a park with good transport links and experience as a destination city would attract a strong following with potential for a national or international event.

16. Next steps?

Pétanque is growing.

It's an alternative to mainstream large pitch sports.

It appeals to all age groups from U11's to over 90's

Continental travel and holiday home ownership abroad is exposing more people to the game.

Repurposing disused areas of council land brings exciting new opportunities.

The return on the capital investment could last for decades with no maintenance.

Yorkshire Pétanque will assist in design, planning and development of terrains and clubs.



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Regional Development Officer

Useful Links

Pétanque England. The National Governing Body.	https://www.petanque-england.uk
How to build a terrain. Detailed specification for building a playing area.	Building a terrain
Why play Pétanque? 8 reasons why Pétanque is good for your physical and mental health.	Why Play?
History of the game	History
Full international rules	FIPJP
From Pétanque England. A comprehensive video that can be used as a training aid. 21 minutes.	https://youtu.be/7wnL4OUBGxk
Simple rules animation by Decathlon - a European sports retailer - and Geologic - their in house boule manufacturer - commentary in English with a heavy French accent. 3 minutes.	https://youtu.be/ljmLFKIVHlk
Petanque in Barcelona. Everyone seems to be happy. 4 minutes.	https://youtu.be/gW7M5yKgNEo
European Championship final 2017 featuring the best players in the world. Over an hour with commentary in French.	https://youtu.be/7UPxQAvb6E0