

More than 700 council football pitches lost as austerity trashes next generation



Cruel cuts follow all England Champions League final and ahead of Women's World Cup

More than 700 council football pitches have been lost in Britain since 2010 research by GMB reveals.

The figures emerge ahead of GMB's Annual Congress, which begins place in Brighton on Sunday [June 9, 2019].



There were 710 less local authority owned or operated football pitches in the financial year 2017/18 than there were in 2009/10 – before the Conservative’s austerity project began.

The worst hit region was the North West, which lost a massive 164 pitches during that period.

The figures come from a Freedom of Information request made by GMB to all local authorities in Britain.

Councils in [England had government funding slashed by 49% in real terms between 10/11 and 17/18.](#)

COUNCIL OWNED FOOTBALL PITCHES		
OVERVIEW		
Region/Country	2009/2010	2017/2018
OVERALL	8939.5	8229
Pitches lost		710.5
YORKSHIRE	819	743
Pitches lost		76
LONDON	781	727
Pitches lost		54
NORTH WEST	1634	1470
Pitches lost		164
WALES	621	539
Pitches lost		82
SOUTH EAST	1027.5	1035
Pitches lost		-7.5



EAST OF ENGLAND	639	566
Pitches lost		73
SOUTH WEST	390	369
Pitches lost		21
SCOTLAND	1261	1132
Pitches lost		101
EAST MIDLANDS	663	628
Pitches lost		35
WEST MIDLANDS	575	491
Pitches lost		84
NORTH EAST	529	529
Pitches lost		0

Tim Roache, GMB General Secretary said:

"Losing more than 700 council footy pitches shows what the Government's slash and burn approach to local government means in reality.

"Councils have had their funding cut in half since 2010 - they're struggling to fund the basics and keep the show on the road.

"We've just had two English teams in the Champions League final - while the England men and women's national teams are about to head into international tournaments.

"Just contrast that with this sorry state of affairs at the grassroots, where opportunities for the next generation of players are being trashed.

Leroy Rosenior, former West Ham, Fulham and QPR striker, said:

"It's a national tragedy that fewer and fewer kids will have a place to play as a result of short-sighted cuts, putting efforts to open football up to more youngsters and develop diverse, welcoming and healthy sporting communities in jeopardy."



Mr Rosenior - who also managed Torquay, Brentford and the Sierra Leone national side and was appointed MBE for his services to tackling discrimination in sport - will address delegates at GMB's Congress in Brighton next week in his capacity as an ambassador for leading grassroots anti-racism charity Show Racism The Red Card.

"Grassroots football is the breeding ground for the next generation of England stars, but it's also a crucial arena for tackling racism and discrimination at an early age.

"Selling off pitches reduces the number of open and inclusive arenas where young footballers can grow and develop," he said.

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