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# How Hednesford Town's Keys Park Became the Home of One of the Most Advanced Football Pitches in the World

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A new, state-of-the-art hybrid pitch looks set to play a major role in a season to remember for Hednesford Town FC, with the club challenging at the top of the Northern Premier League just months after the pitch was installed.

The pitch, which was developed and delivered through a collaboration between SIS Pitches, SEL Environmental and FORMA, was installed over the summer as part of a major investment programme led by club owners, Craig and Amanda Gwilt.

Designed to provide a faster, more durable and consistent playing surface, as well as advanced water recycling capabilities, the new hybrid pitch system is now being hailed as a key factor behind the Pitmen's strong start to the 2025/26 campaign.

Hednesford's board appointed SEL Environmental as the project's main contractor, who in turn approached SIS Pitches, having been made aware of the business's expertise and delivery of Everton's state-of-the-art pitch at Hill Dickinson Stadium. Noting the ambitions for Hednesford's 6,000 capacity Keys Park, the vision was to install the same pitch system as Everton's, bringing a world-class playing surface to English football's seventh tier.

The standout feature of the new Keys Park pitch is its pristine SIS Grass Hybrid surface. Synthetic fibres have been stitched into the natural grass to give roots a stable anchor, greatly enhancing durability throughout a demanding fixture schedule. These fibres also create vertical channels that encourage efficient water movement and support stronger, deeper root development compared with a standard natural pitch, resulting in a more resilient and consistently high-performing playing surface.

Beneath the playing surface itself, the SIS Air AquaCycle system delivers significant performance and sustainability benefits, combining advanced aeration technology with FORMA's revolutionary 525,000-litre Formavoid® subterranean raft system.

Acting as a water-storage layer directly beneath the pitch, the Formavoid® raft captures rainfall at source and retains it close to the rootzone for controlled, sustainable reuse. During heavy rainfall, the aeration system's vacuum fan draws excess water through the pitch into the raft, where it can either be harvested for irrigation or temporarily stored and released at a regulated rate. Meanwhile, the aeration system operates in pressure mode to relieve compaction, enhancing airflow and nutrient movement to promote healthier turf.

With limited space at the stadium, a bespoke 40-foot containerised plant room was created and installed on site. Fully controllable via smartphone, tablet or computer, the solution is expected to deliver strong environmental gains and a favourable long-term return for the club.

Commercially, the new hybrid pitch is already proving its value. With capacity for up to three times the use of a standard natural surface, Keys Park can now host Premier League academies, women's fixtures, and potentially serve as a training venue for future international tournaments.

Craig Gwilt, owner and chairman at Hednesford Town FC said: "We set out to install one of the most technologically advanced pitches in the world here at Keys Park and certainly feel like we've achieved that goal. Feedback from our own coaching staff and players, as well as from opposition clubs has been overwhelmingly positive so far. We certainly feel like we have one of the best facilities in the region, if not the country here in Hednesford, which really helps to put the club on the map and allows us to forge partnerships with some of our neighbouring Premier League and EFL clubs."

"One of the most satisfying aspects of the project is that we've not only introduced an asset that will benefit the club commercially but will also minimise our environmental impact. For us, balancing those two has always been paramount."