

Ide Parish Council

GREEN SPACE FOR IDE

Weir Meadow Playing Field & Northern Fields and Ide Community Orchard

Joint Projects Fundraising Strategy

Version 10

BACKGROUND

Two community projects, Weir Meadow Playing Field and Ide Community Orchard, have reached the point where they are now feasible and viable propositions. We have three year option agreements to purchase each of the sites from the Church Commissioners. This means that fundraising can begin.

Ide has no public outdoor space beyond its tiny Green. It is a village choked and blighted by traffic, split in two by the A30, bordered on one side by six lanes of road, and set tight within commercial, agricultural operations. Residents have no access to the surrounding countryside to speak of; and lack significant public green space to recreate, play or relax. Even the Green is bordered by roads on two of its three 45m sides and its use is constrained. Residents have to travel to the city of Exeter or a local town to use a playing field, visit a park or go to a playground.

Pynes Orchard offers 3.5 acres of land on the edge of the village to start a community orchard providing open green space for physical horticultural work, biodiversity, education, rest and relaxation, and community events. In partnership with local farmer Andy Bragg, we have rented the orchard since September 2018 in order to protect it from grazing damage, start to restore the older trees, and in January 2020 plant 72 new fruit trees. But it remains a private orchard, with no public access.

Weir Meadow offers a rare, flat field of six acres for a sport, walking and enjoying green open space close to home. Both projects are once in a century opportunities. In order to acquire Weir Meadow free from intrusive access rights by the heavy agricultural vehicles which currently use it to reach the two adjacent fields to the north - the Northern Fields - we have decided to acquire those fields too (for further details of both projects, see our fund raising prospectuses on www.greenspaceforide.co.uk, or request a paper copy).

We need £170,280 to buy Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields; and £62,050 to buy the Orchard. These figures exclude the VAT (£8,000 for Weir Meadow, zero for Northern Fields, £11,560 for the Orchard) which must be paid but is fully reclaimable by the Parish Council.

We have already raised £13,283 for Weir Meadow, and £8,587 for the Orchard (at 24 August 2021) from community groups, district and parish councils and individuals over the past four years to get to this point. Out of hours pro bono work from professionals in the village - legal, environmental, ecological, planning, agricultural and water - has saved us many additional thousands of pounds in fees.

We will need further fund raising efforts for Weir Meadow to meet the costs of car parking and planting, and for developing the recreation ground over time with the planned pitches, playground, multi-use games area and BMX pump track. There will also be some further costs to secure the perimeter of the Orchard. But we can do none of these until and unless we own the land. Buying the land is, therefore, our primary goal at this stage.

PARISH COUNCIL

Ide Parish Council had the idea and set up the working groups. It has taken five years of negotiation to reach this stage. Government, county and district authorities encourage Parish Councils to own land and raise money, including by borrowing, for projects such as these. It would also be possible for charitable bodies to lead the projects, with certain advantages for fund raising. But for the reasons set out in table 1, we have decided to stick with the Parish Council as the buyer, the initial fund raiser and as borrower if necessary. We reserve the option to move to using a charity for later fund raising, in particular for the Orchard, if and when that became the best approach.

The Parish Council has set up dedicated bank accounts for each project.

RUNNING THE PROJECTS

How will the projects work longer term, once we own the sites?

Many community orchards (and there are fifty in South Devon) are run by charitable trusts. We have an established, expert working group which has raised money to run the orchard under a rental licence for the last three years. There is a group of volunteers ready to assist with pruning and at harvest time. The Council would pledge the continued use of the land as an orchard, whether managed by the present Parish Council working group or in accordance with the charitable objectives of a free standing trust.

The Weir Meadow Working Group has significant expertise - sporting, legal, environmental and ecological, financial and agricultural - among its members, with the enthusiasm and persistence needed for our negotiations with the Church Commissioners. From the community it has raised the money to fund architectural and survey fees, and obtained planning permission for a recreation ground on the Meadow. Members of the working group, in particular the cricket and football clubs, will form the nucleus of a management committee to run Weir Meadow Playing Field on behalf of the Parish Council. We will also investigate the possible benefits of forming a Trust to manage the ground in the longer term. We intend to rent the Northern Fields to a local farmer to generate funds towards the Playing Field's running costs, possibly with grant funding for a more biodiverse use.

STRATEGY

There are several elements to the strategy. The order in which we employ them is important.

1. Local Resident Donations

Certain local residents may have a special interest in the Orchard or Weir Meadow Project, for their own particular reason. They may live near the Orchard and have the resources to be able to make a donation to support securing the orchard for future generations and ensure it can never be considered for housing. Likewise, there will be many in the village of Ide and beyond who will have an interest in the sporting and recreational activities that Weir Meadow can provide, for themselves and future generations. Donors will be free to choose whether to give to one or other or both projects. This is the measure we will start with. It may yield a significant proportion of the money we seek; and if fruitful, it would set us up for matched funding bids to other donors or bodies.

To do this we have published and delivered to every household in the parish a joint projects fund raising leaflet. We have also produced an attractive, separate fund raising prospectus brochure for each project, setting out the background, rationale, progress to date and budget for each project in greater detail.

2. National Lottery Heritage Fund; landfill trusts such as Viridor

Targeted applications will be made to national and local bodies, whose criteria the Community Orchard and Weir Meadow meet, and which accept applications from Parish Councils. We will make these applications together, in parallel, with potential partners to maximize our chances of securing funds. They will have a better chance of success if submitted when we have secured significant matching funds from community fund raising.

3. Borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

Parish Councils have privileged access to loans, at low rates, for up to 50 years, with the power to service the loan (interest and capital repayments) through a levy on the Council Tax through the parish precept. This requires evidence of community support from the parish, and formal approval from the Secretary of State. We see borrowing as a back up to our other fund raising efforts. A loan could be particularly suitable for the purchase of the Northern Fields, which are unlikely, when rented to a tenant, to provide public open green space in the way that the Orchard and Meadow will.

As an illustration, if the Parish Council were to take a 50 year loan at a fixed rate from the PWLB for £130,000 (the cost of the Northern Fields) it would mean an increase in Council Tax for a band D household of £1.40 a month, based on the 1.98% fixed interest rate applying on 24 August 2021. This strikes the fund raising group as a relatively simple and inexpensive way to raise such a large sum.

A loan could also be a helpful instrument if we wished to borrow funds shorter term, to cover reclaimable VAT, or with the intention of partial, early repayment should the Parish Council receive CIL payments on a planned development which has been recently approved elsewhere in the village.

With recent developments in the UK economy, it is unlikely that interest rates will fall further; and rather more likely that they could rise over the next year. It may, therefore, be wise to consider using the PWLB facility sooner than we had originally thought.

4. Crowdfunding

This is a popular way to raise funds for local projects and can sometimes go viral in a way that couldn't be imagined. Expertise will be needed to explore this route, but it will be worth pursuing. It is valid and legal for parish councils to use crowdfunding for projects such as ours. We have already set up a fund raising website www.greenspaceforide.co.uk which accepts online donations.

5. Sponsorship - Trees and Named 3 metre Squares

Local residents and interested parties will be invited to sponsor trees for both projects; and named 3 metre squares of land in Weir Meadow.

The cost for one tree will be £150; £250 for two trees; each additional tree £125. There are now around 100 trees in the Orchard, and potential for 50 more in Weir Meadow. This could raise around £15,000 and £7,500 respectively. We hope that this will be a popular way of supporting the project and a way perhaps to act as a memorial to a special person, pet or memory.

The Meadow contains 2,700 notional squares of land measuring 3x3 metres. One named 3 metre square will cost £70 to sponsor. If every 3 metre square was sponsored, we would raise £189,000.

6. Local Fundraising Events/Activity

We will encourage a variety of fundraising events and activities within the community, with a theme for each month of the year. A virtual sponsored cycle ride to Wembley took place in June 2021. A Family Sports Day was held at the cricket pitch in August.

7. Work in kind

We recognise that not everyone is able to contribute financially. It will be possible and necessary to offer practical help such as labour, donation of tools or professional expertise. We would like to account for all the hours of labour undertaken in getting the projects funded.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As One – Not two. We have decided on a joint approach to fundraising for these two projects, to avoid competition, confusion and dissipated effort; and to make best use of the talent and resources available. But, whilst the two projects are linked, they are also very different. We intend to make sure that messaging, communication, and effort is focussed on the differences and the similarities; the importance of working together; and that donors can choose to give to one or other project, or to both.

Timeframe - We have signed three-year option agreements to buy both sites with the Church Commissioners. An annual licence will continue for the Orchard during the option period, to enable the project group limited access to the ground to continue restorative work, alongside the fundraising. However, the Commissioners will retain their current farm tenant on Weir Meadow and Northern Fields until such time as we buy them.

FUNDING DETAILS

Weir Meadow & Northern Fields	£
Purchase of Weir Meadow	40,000.00
VAT on Weir Meadow	8,000.00
Purchase of Northern Fields (no VAT)	130,000.00
Stamp duty on combined purchase (calculated at 1% of £28,000 = amount over £150k inc. VAT)	280.00
TOTAL inc VAT	178,280.00
VAT to be reclaimed	8,000.00

Ide Community Orchard	£
Purchase of Pynes Victorian Orchard	62,050.00
VAT on portion of Orchard opted to tax	11,560.00
TOTAL inc VAT	73,610.00
VAT to be reclaimed	<u>11,560.00</u>

JOINT PROJECTS FUND RAISING GROUP

Our aim is to raise the funds to buy Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields, and Pynes Victorian Orchard. A Joint Projects Group has formed, to bring together people in the village with experience, expertise and commitment to the projects. People will be needed to make funding applications, organise fundraising events, and engage with potential donors. We will need to ensure close, trusted links between the two project teams as they come together, to maximise the combined nature of this historic endeavour, whilst also making the most of the differences in the two projects to draw in funding from a wide variety of sources.

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Richard Cottle (Chair Weir Meadow WG)
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TABLE 1

	Buy	Raise funds	Own and run "End Game"
Charity	<p>Would need new body setting up and compliance with charitable objects.</p> <p>A subsale to the Charity or the grant of a lease by the PC could be effected without the need for the CC's consent.</p> <p>Might fold. Not underwritten by government or LA.</p> <p>The use of the N Fields for charitable purposes might be tricky for a charity if let to a farmer. Use by proprietary sports clubs would not qualify for charitable status.</p>	<p>Many grant making bodies require applicants to be charities..</p> <p>Allows Gift Aid tax relief -benefitting the donors and charity.</p> <p>Can't borrow.</p> <p>May have to give money back if target not reached.</p> <p>Could set up a separate charitable body later if required.</p> <p>Appeal for Orchard may have an attraction outside the immediate Parish.</p>	<p>Many community orchards run by charitable trusts.</p> <p>Orchard simpler, easier and cheaper to run than Rec Ground.</p> <p>Could guarantee ongoing use via charitable objects, although there would be a power of sale.</p> <p>Complex to set up and significant ongoing reporting and administration.</p> <p>Could not control use of sports pitches and facilities as clubs may wish.</p>
Parish Council	<p>Established, trusted, statutory institution, underwritten by govt and LA. Not going anywhere soon.</p> <p>Localism Act encourages PCs to buy and own land.</p> <p>Good relationship w willing vendor CCs over 4 years. Option to Purchase Agreement docs made out to IPC. Village supports it.</p>	<p>All methods allowed, including borrowing.</p> <p>Limits range of bodies open to application from a PC; but may open door to others.</p> <p>Donors may not wish to give to a LA, though so far this has not been a problem in the village, who, rightly, see the PC as theirs.</p> <p>Intention is for PC guarantee intended use 'in perpetuum' but subject to a power of sale.</p> <p>The N Fields may not qualify for grant making bodies; donors may not favour buying them; so we may have to borrow for the N Fields.</p>	<p>2 strong working groups with defined terms of reference exist to hand over task of running long term, under overall umbrella of PC.</p> <p>Full control.</p> <p>PC can let the N Fields to a tenant for income to support running the recreation ground..</p>
Which is better?	Parish Council	Win some, lose some. PC better to start with.	<p>Start both w PC. Possibly transfer or lease Orchard to a free standing trust as open public use less problematic.</p> <p>Probably keep and strengthen WMWG, with good sports club membership, to run Rec Ground for the PC. Possibility of a trust.</p>