

WEIR MEADOW and NORTHERN FIELDS

Recreational Green Space for Ide



Weir Meadow looking north to the Northern Fields

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public open space, parkland, a playing field: such assets are rare in a rural community. Ide is a tightly packed village, in a managed agricultural landscape. Vehicles crowd its streets. The village green, small and bounded on two sides by road, is the only open space for people to gather.

So when the opportunity came to acquire a flat, six acre field, Weir Meadow, at the western edge of the village on Halscombe Lane, the Parish Council determined to do just that: to provide open space for relaxation, recreation and sport, publicly owned, for public use, for the first time in Ide’s history. In 2017 the owners, the Church Commissioners, accepted our offer to buy Weir Meadow. In 2018 the proposal to create a recreation ground on it passed into planning law in the Ide Neighbourhood Plan. In 2020 we secured planning permission for change of use from agriculture to a recreation ground.

Because we were always going to need time to raise the money, the Commissioners agreed to enter into an Option to Purchase Agreement with us, securing our right to buy within three years of signing, at an agreed price, under agreed conditions. Negotiations over the option agreement took longer than expected, because the Commissioners wished to retain the right of agricultural access across the Meadow to the Northern Fields for their tenant farmer.

We pursued several possible solutions. We considered sharing the entrance to the meadow with the agricultural contractors’ machinery, and building a

fenced off perimeter track round one or other margin of the meadow for the vehicles. But we judged it too dangerous for the public, too disruptive to recreational events, insufficiently controllable, and repeatedly damaging to the ground at the entrance. We looked at re-opening the old access entrance to Northern Fields on College Lane; but this proved unacceptable to the Commissioners.

And we examined the feasibility of building a bridge across the brook from Triangular Field to the north eastern corner of Weir Meadow. But, whilst this was acceptable to the Commissioners, it proved prohibitively expensive when put out for estimate; and still did not give us unfettered occupation and control of the site in perpetuity.

The answer eventually became clear. Owning the Northern Fields themselves would allow us to protect land on the edge of the village from development; ensure it was used in an ecologically positive way; provide public access with a new footpath, at the same time as solving the problem of agricultural access across Weir Meadow; and generate rental income for running the playing field. Access to the Northern Fields down College Lane poses no problem for the size of vehicle needed to farm these fields sustainably. The Commissioners agreed to sell. In October 2019 we agreed a price, and the two fields are now part of the project, along with Triangular Field.

We held two public meetings in February 2020 which confirmed the community's support for our plans.

In March 2021 we signed and exchanged an option agreement with the Commissioners, allowing us three years to raise the funds, certain that the purchase is ours to make at any point during that period.

Parish Councils are in a good position to take on projects like this. Government and county councils encourage parishes to own and manage land. Parishes are permanent, statutory, elected bodies, with established systems of scrutiny, probity and accountability. They can raise funds and borrow at preferential rates, for up to fifty years, from the Public Works Loan Board; reclaim VAT; and set their own annual precept demand from their district council.

We are also fortunate, for the Church Commissioners have honoured our long term vision for the community. They backed us over the last four years by sticking with negotiations for an option agreement that both of us could accept.

Phase I of the project is complete: we have a three year option agreement and planning permission for change of use. Now in Phase II we have to raise £178,000 to buy the land.

This prospectus sets out the history of the project in more detail; the plan for its four phases; money raised so far; and the spending budget for which we seek your help with funds.

The Idea

A PLAYING FIELD for IDE

It's Autumn 2016. People pack Ide Memorial Hall to discuss an early draft of the Neighbourhood Plan and to hear about the Church Commissioners' plans to develop Pynes Farm Yard. Several voice their hopes for a public green space - a village park - big enough for play, sport and recreation. A flat six acre field on the edge of the village would be handy.

The idea for Weir Meadow recreation ground is born.

Ide is built tight, and set in a closely managed agricultural landscape. Vehicles fill its streets and roads. In common with other rural villages, to live in Ide is to live in the country, but with limited access to the surrounding countryside. Ide lacks the local, public spaces for recreation, play, exercise and sport which town and city dwellers take for granted.

At present, the Green is the only public, open place to gather in Ide. It's a picturesque, but small (45 metre sided), triangle of grass bounded by road on two sides, used for fetes, picnics, exercise classes and youngsters' football kickarounds. Ide Cricket Club runs a home ground, adjacent to Weir Meadow; but it's on private land let to the club year on year, and is not open to the public. The Parish Council operates a small children's play area by Ide School with a slide, swings and see-saw. It's limited to children up to six years old with a parent. Most people have to drive out of the village to enjoy some space or pursue their sport.

WEIR MEADOW

Weir Meadow is a flat, six acre field on the western edge of Ide. It was the cricket ground until 25 years ago. Between 2014 and 2018 an annual memorial rugby match was played on a prepared pitch on its eastern half. It is perfect for a community sport and recreation ground. Entrance to the field from Station Road is over a low concrete bridge across Fordland Brook. It lies in flood zone 3, low lying land with the potential to flood, but which has not actually flooded for at least forty years, and probably more. Its west, south and eastern boundaries are described by Fordland Brook. The natural course of the brook used to be across the northern boundary of the Meadow along the foot of Northern Fields - until some time before 1540, when a stone walled leat, and the eponymous weir at the south east corner of the Meadow, were built, re-routing the brook south, to supply the mill in High Street with water power. The two Northern Fields lie immediately north of the Meadow.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Emboldened by what a Neighbourhood Plan could achieve, the Parish Council opened discussions with the Commissioners in 2016 about the possibility of buying Weir Meadow as a recreation ground; and put the proposal as a policy into the Neighbourhood Plan.

In June 2017 the Parish Council set up a Weir Meadow Working Group to gather ideas for developing the Meadow for recreational use; to produce a layout for the Neighbourhood Plan; to obtain planning permission for change of use and development; and to fundraise to acquire the land, and develop the proposed facilities.

In autumn 2017, after a year of negotiations, the Commissioners agreed to sell us Weir Meadow for £40,000 plus VAT. And in September 2018 the Ide Neighbourhood Plan was formally 'made' after approval by Teignbridge District Council: its policy IDE05 proposes developing land at Weir Meadow to provide outdoor sports and recreation facilities.

The Reality

ACCESS

Then we hit a snag. Apart from their standard conditions, which included us as buyer meeting their professional fees, the Church Commissioners insisted on maintaining rights of access for agricultural vehicles and plant over Weir Meadow to the two Northern Fields beyond, which they also own and let to a tenant. Because farm machines - combine harvesters in particular - now come so big, the historic vehicular access to the Northern Fields, down College Lane from Longdown, was unacceptable to this tenant. We were emphatic, for our part, that the Parish Council would only buy the Meadow unencumbered. We were also advised that less intensive farming practices such as returning the land to pasture were more suitable for these steep fields; and that the existing access point (currently closed off by post and rail) from College Lane would be adequate for that purpose.

We spent the next year in discussion with the Commissioners exploring options to re-open the entrance to Northern Fields from College Lane to allow acceptable access; but to no avail.

We explored in detail the possible solution of building a perimeter track for agricultural vehicle access round the west or the east of the Meadow to Northern Fields, using the present entrance from Station Road. But we could not get round the problem of safety for those using the Meadow and its entrance. We want the ground to be open to the public at all times. An entrance shared by families and large agricultural contractors' plant simultaneously could not be made safe enough. Farming

activities are unpredictable, weather dependent, proceed at any time of day, any day of the week, decided at short notice: warning residents, or scheduling matches and events to fit the farming programme, was not practical. We stood to lose a significant area of ground to a perimeter track and its fencing. The ground at the entrance would continue rutted and muddy, unsuitable for cars coming onto the ground for sport.

We tested the feasibility of building a bridge for farm vehicles across Fordland Brook from Triangular Field to the east. It would still allow farm vehicles to use the north-east corner of the Meadow, but solved the problems of a shared entrance and a long perimeter track. The Commissioners were content with the bridge idea. We obtained estimates from two builders. The likely cost at around £35,000 plus VAT, plus design, engineer and planning fees, was prohibitively expensive, to build a bridge strong enough for heavy plant, that we did not really want, and still have tractors, trailers and combines driving over part of our land.

If we were to buy land in perpetuity for the community, it would need to be unencumbered, allowing us full control and unfettered use.

The Answer

NORTHERN FIELDS

The Northern Fields are two adjacent, steep, south facing fields lying between Weir Meadow and College Lane. They are 17.46 acres in total, four of which are rough grassland too steep to plough. The rest is currently tilled to grow crops in rotation, let to a tenant farmer. At present agricultural vehicles and machinery access them from Station Road, across Weir Meadow and through a gap in the hedge in the north eastern corner of the Meadow. There is another entry point to the north, on College Lane, coming down from Longdown. This entrance is currently unused, and simple to re-open. Our advice is that the fields are best suited to grass pasture, and being farmed sustainably using four wheel drive machinery and grassland implements; and that accessing the fields from College Lane would not pose a problem for that scale of plant.

So in 2019 we approached the Commissioners with a view to buying the two Northern Fields outright. At a stroke this would protect land on the edge of the village from building development, provide public access over the fields with a new footpath, introduce less intensive farming methods to these steep fields, provide opportunities for tree planting; and at the same time overcome the problem of retained agricultural access across the Meadow.

Advice from our agricultural consultant is to rent the Northern Fields to a tenant farmer and generate income to service the running of the Fields and Weir Meadow. We would look to include conditions in a lease to fit the Council's ambitions for the land: a public footpath,

and sustainable, ecologically considerate agricultural practice. Letting the fields in this way will also free future Ide Parish Councils from the burden of having to deal themselves with the fast changing bureaucracy of farm subsidies and grants.

TRIANGULAR FIELD

This small, marshy field of less than an acre has been left wild for the past 25 or more years, occasionally flail mown to keep the brambles in check. Before that it was intermittently grazed by horses. It's an ecologically rich patch of wild, unkempt land which we had not expected to own until it was included with Weir Meadow, at no additional cost, during negotiations for Northern Fields.

FURTHER OFFER ACCEPTED

The Commissioners responded favourably to our approach to buy the Northern Fields.

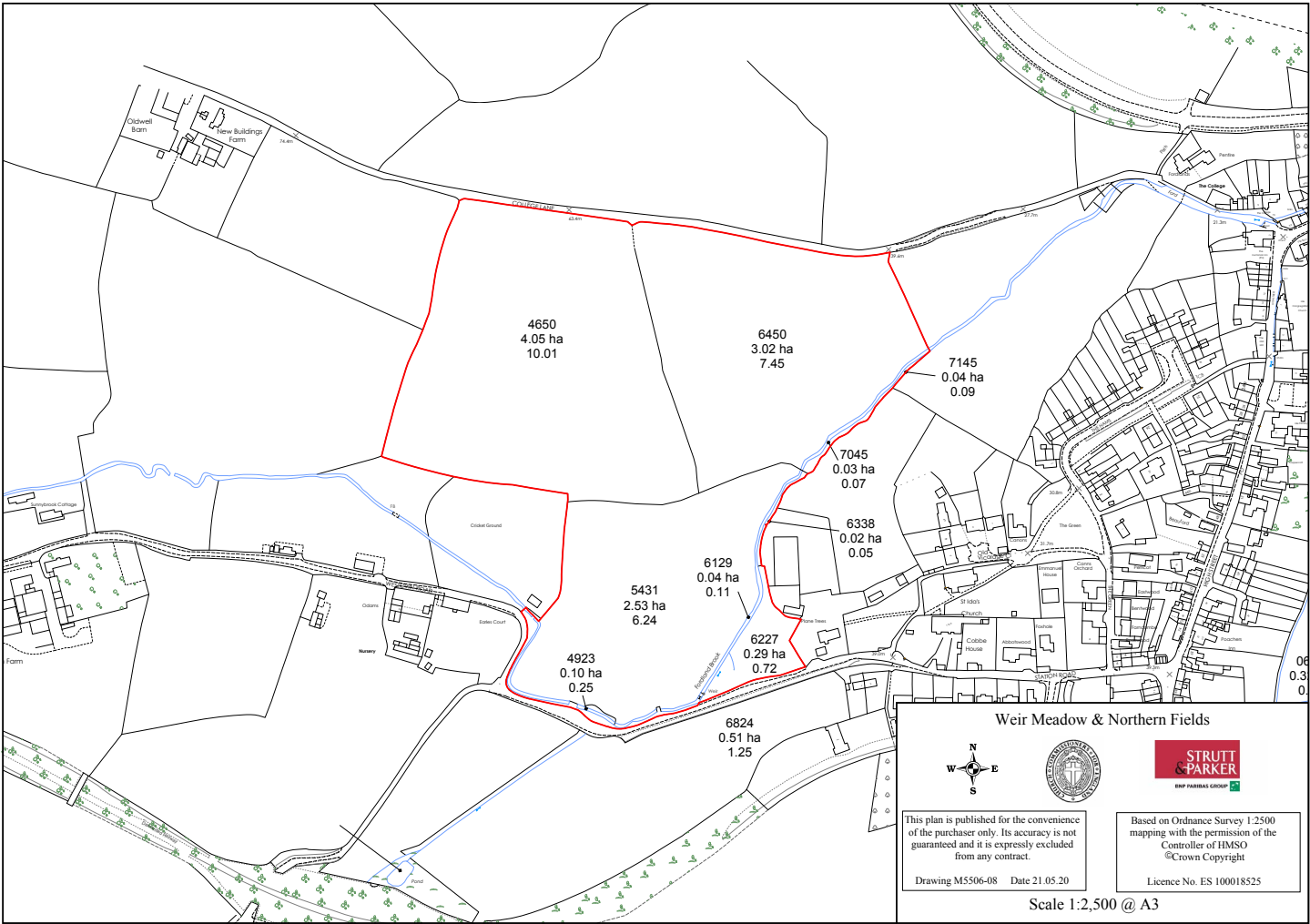
We had them valued by two independent valuers; and in October 2019 the Commissioners accepted our offer of £130,000 for the Northern Fields, making a total of £170,000 plus £8,000 VAT, for the four fields: Weir Meadow, two Northern Fields and Triangular Field (only the Meadow is opted for VAT).

We subsequently agreed Heads of Terms in liaison with Strutt & Parker, the Commissioners' agent in Exeter, and with the Commissioners' office in London.

CONSULTING RESIDENTS

In late February 2020 we held two public village hall meetings, scheduled at different times to allow maximum attendance at one or the other, to explain and take questions on the Parish Council's plans to buy and use the fields.

Owning these fields will immediately protect them against building beyond the margins of the current village settlement; and allow public, community access to open green space for recreation. Our plans received enthusiastic local support, a green light to proceed.



The Two Parties

IDE PARISH COUNCIL

Parish councils are in a good position to take on projects like this. The Government and county councils encourage parishes to own and manage land on behalf of the communities they represent. They are statutory bodies, the most local tier of local government, with established structures, procedures and duties, elected members, and guaranteed funding and support. They are longstanding, permanent, democratic institutions. They have financial systems, checks and safeguards in place to allow them to raise funds and spend money.

As a parish council, we can also borrow money from the Public Works Loan Board at preferential rates for periods of up to fifty years; we can set our own annual precept with the district council; and reclaim VAT.

THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The Commissioners knew from the outset that the Parish Council didn't have the funds in hand to buy their fields. Our bind was that we needed to clear two legal hurdles before asking anyone to give or lend us money: planning permission to change the use of Weir Meadow from farming to recreation; and proof of a vendor willing to wait and sell them, to us and no-one else, for an agreed price, within a generous sell by window. A vendor would not normally enter negotiations with a buyer without proof of funds. So we have the Church Commissioners and their staff to thank for their patience and goodwill in agreeing to work with us on drafting a three year Option to Purchase Agreement. They have honoured our long term vision for the community, and backed us by hanging in and holding on.

Two Hurdles

PLANNING PERMISSION

Encouraged by the wholehearted support expressed by residents at both February 2020 meetings, and given the go ahead by the full Parish Council, the Working Group went on to submit two planning applications for Weir Meadow in April 2020: one for change of use to a recreation ground, and one to erect a sports pavilion with associated parking. Permission was granted for both applications, with conditions, by Teignbridge DC on 16 October 2020. On 7 June 2021 the pre-commencement conditions for change of use (approved management plans for water drainage, and for landscape and environment) were successfully discharged.

OPTION TO PURCHASE AGREEMENT

Solicitor David Howe has acted for the Parish Council in its complex dealings with the Commissioners' legal team. On 26 March 2021 we signed an Option Agreement giving us three years from signing to raise the money to purchase the land. We can exercise that option at any point during the three years. We are now signed up with the Commissioners to a document that's front loaded with the details of conditions, covenants, overages, transfer and price necessary to proceed as soon as we have the funds. With both instruments in place, the two legal hurdles are now clear.

Four Phases of the Project

PHASE I - complete

We have so far raised £13,283 (at 24 August 2021) and cleared the two hurdles of securing planning permission and an option agreement. We have produced fund raising leaflets and a full prospectus.

PHASE II

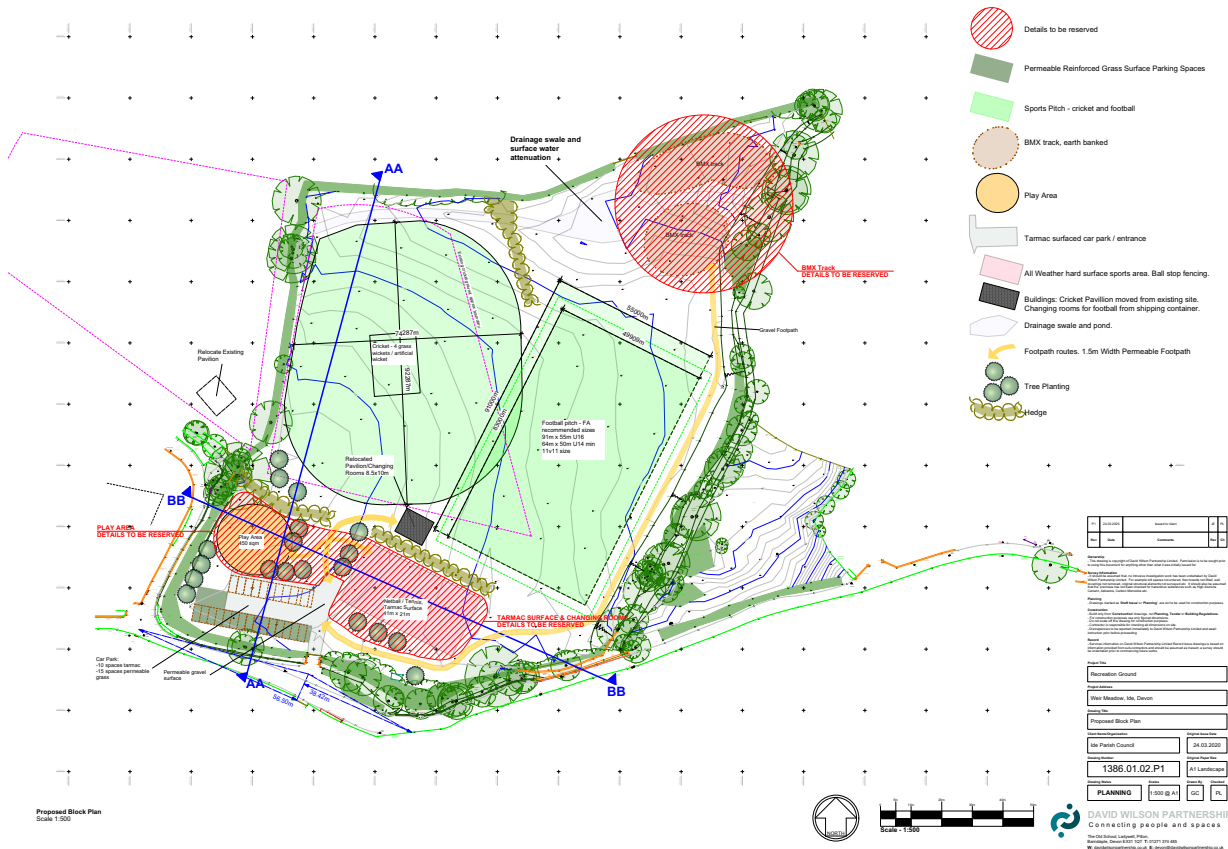
Raise the funds to buy Weir Meadow, the Northern Fields and Triangular Field.
Plan in detail the use of Northern Fields and Triangular Field.

PHASE III

Start to use Weir Meadow as a Playing Field with cricket and football / rugby pitch, and public access.
Let the Northern Fields.

PHASE IV

Raise the funds to develop the Meadow in stages, starting with a sports pavilion, car parking, planting and groundworks for which we have planning permission.
The proposed eventual layout includes footpaths; multi-use games area for tennis, netball and five-a-side; a playground; and a BMX pump track.



The Money

MONEY RAISED SO FAR

It's taken four years to reach our current position. We have raised and committed significant start up monies to get us over the two hurdles. This came through generous donations from village groups, clubs and events, Ide Community Shop, private individuals, district and county councils, and with contributions from Ide Parish Council's annual precepts.

We opened a separate Parish Council Recreation Ground account with Lloyds Bank in September 2018 to support the work of the Weir Meadow Working Group.

Money raised so far	£
Parish Council precept contributions	2000.00
Private donations	3795.00
Village Fun Day event	935.00
Royal Wedding and World Cup village events	1550.80
Ide Aloud choir	200.00
Ide Growers gardening club	520.00
Ide Twinning Association	200.00
District and County Councillors	1000.00
Teignbridge Communities Together Fund	243.75
Ide Community Shop	500.00
Ide Cricket Club	750.00
Ide Rugby Club	1000.00
Ide Football Club "cycling to Wembley"	589.05
TOTAL RAISED (at 24 August 2021)	13,283.60
VAT reclaimed	2068.52

MONEY SPENT SO FAR

Below are the "start up hurdle" Phase I costs to reach the present stage. We owe particular gratitude to five Ide residents who have saved us many thousands of pounds in fees and kept the project alive: Julian Perrett, Richard Cloke, Stuart Brooking and Richard Cottle for their pro bono work in providing, respectively, expert ecology, flood risk assessment, tree, and landscape and environment reports for the planning applications; and David Howe, of Michelmores Solicitors, for his commitment, again pro bono, in acting for the Parish Council in negotiations with the Church Commissioners.

Money spent so far (inc VAT)	£
Professional valuation of the land	480.00
Church Commissioners' legal and professional fees	4440.00
Topographical site surveyor's fee	834.00
Architect's and TDC planning fees	6116.00
Local authority searches	657.10
Land Registry	124.04
TOTAL SPENT (at 24 August 2021)	12,651.14
All VAT paid has been reclaimed	

MONEY WE NEED TO RAISE in PHASE II TO BUY THE LAND

PHASE II FUND RAISING	
Purchase of Weir Meadow	
£40,000 + VAT £8,000 (reclaimable)	48,000.00
Purchase of Northern Fields	
£130,000 (zero VAT)	130,000.00
Stamp duty at 1% of £28,000	
(= amount over £150k inc. VAT)	280.00

FUNDING OPTIONS

- There are three main sources for capital and development costs:
- Individual donations
 - Grant giving bodies, the National Lottery, and sporting organisations
 - Borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), a government backed body specifically set up to lend at preferential rates to public organisations, in particular to parish councils.

Our proposal is to dedicate the first few months to raising money by individual donations and grants. We will then, if necessary, seek to raise the balance by a loan. As an illustration, if we were to take a 50 year loan for £130,000 from the PWLB, at the current fixed rate of interest of 1.98%, and decided to pay it back by increasing our annual parish precept, and thus raising council tax - a common and recommended method – it would need an increase in council tax of £1.40 per month (£16.87 per annum) for the average band D household.

VAT

The Commissioners have opted to tax (charge VAT) on the sale of Weir Meadow, but not on the sale of the Northern Fields. This is helpful to us, because it means the Parish Council will be able to use the VAT126 procedure to reclaim VAT, without having to register for VAT.

Project Management

Ide Parish Council set up Weir Meadow Working Group (WMWG). We have met every 4-8 weeks since June 2017. The group has brought together members of the Parish Council with those in the community who have expertise or a stake in aspects of the project.

Members of the Weir Meadow Working Group

Doug Bell	Land and sport
Nick Bradley	Parish Council
Stuart Brooking	Football and trees
Richard Cloke	Cricket, flood risk and water
Richard Cottle (current Chair)	Ecology and environment
Cheryl Haddy	Sport and fundraising
David Howe	Legal
Mel Liversage	Parish Clerk
Jessica Paine	Parish Council
Pete Skinner	Agriculture
Tony Stearman	Rugby
Mark Thomas	Parish Council
Phil Willcock	Treasurer

The Parish Council has oversight of the project and receives regular reports from the working group at its meetings.

Ide Parish Council will own the freehold of the land. The working group, which is accountable to the Parish Council for the decisions and financial arrangements it makes, will manage the development of the Meadow. The Parish Council will let the Northern Fields on a lease constructed to its wishes. We will generate income to run Weir Meadow Playing Field with rent from sports clubs for the grounds, and rent from any tenant farmer on the Northern Fields.

The Parish Council plans to investigate the possible benefits of forming a Trust to take on the long term management of the recreation ground and facilities.

HOW YOU CAN GIVE

Using the enclosed donation form, also available on the Ide Village website, the simplest way is to donate direct to the Ide Parish Council Recreation Ground fund by bank transfer to a dedicated account specifically set up for Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields:

Lloyds Bank sort code	30-80-37
Account number	38419662
Account name	"Ide Parish Council Rec Ground"

You can also give online by visiting the Green Space for Ide website direct or via the Ide Village website:

www.greenspaceforide.co.uk

You can sponsor trees in the Meadow:

£150 for one tree, £250 for two trees, each additional tree £125, by using the enclosed donation form.

You can sponsor named 3x3 metre squares of the Meadow for £70 per square, using the donation form.

If writing a cheque please make it to:

'Ide Parish Council Rec Ground' and use the enclosed donation form

If you prefer to give regularly, you can set up a standing order using the donation form.

Weir Meadow Playing Field will be for the whole village.

We hope that many residents and those living in the surrounding area will give generously to support the project. For further information about giving please contact:

Nick Bradley
Weir Meadow Working Group
ncabradley@gmail.com
0787 946 3324

Enclosed: Donation Form



Looking north-west from the weir

Prospectus Version 11

August 2021

Weir Meadow, Halscombe Lane, Ide, EX2 9TQ

Northern Fields, College Lane, Ide, EX2 9TF

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