

## **Update for Ide Parish Council meeting on 16 March 2022 from the Weir Meadow Working Group - Paper 5**

Since the last update, two meetings of the WMWG have been held (18<sup>th</sup> January and 21<sup>st</sup> February) both in conjunction with the Joint Projects Fund Raising Group (JPFRG). This coming together of the two groups was deemed to be the most effective use of people's time given that there was a significant cross-over of personnel between the two groups and the work of the WMWG has essentially been dominated by the fundraising process to purchase Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields.

### **Fundraising and Borrowing**

At 21<sup>st</sup> February a total of £42,715.96 had been raised towards the purchase of Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields. Three donors had agreed that their gifts, totalling £16,500, could be used on either Weir Meadow or the Orchard, whichever the Parish Council judged the better use of time and funds.

At an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March it was agreed to use the £16,500 to purchase the Orchard. Reclaimed VAT could then be used towards initial, necessary site works in Weir Meadow. It was also agreed that an application to the Secretary of State, via DALC, would be made to borrow £152,826 for the purchase of both Weir Meadow/Northern Fields and the Orchard. It is expected that, if successful, the loan could be made available to the Parish Council by this June or July.

Further fundraising events during the spring/summer are being planned, including an event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, a cricket club summer fun day and a potential concert at Westown Farm. Funds from these events would go towards developing facilities at Weir Meadow and fulfilling the conditions set out in the planning consent for the site.

### **Managing Northern Fields and Weir Meadow Following Purchase**

With the success of fundraising and the decision made to borrow the outstanding amount for land purchase, consideration has been given at the meetings to the next steps. Assuming that the purchase of the site proceeds as planned we can expect to take possession of the meadow and fields this summer or early autumn.

Depending on funding for groundworks and re-seeding the aim would be to install an artificial cricket wicket during winter 2022/23. The cricket club has access to equipment to maintain the wicket and there would be no need for drainage of the pitches.

There will be a rapid need for signage and dog waste bins as soon as we own the land, particularly as the site already attracts a significant number of dog walkers.

Nick Bradley has set up a meeting on 15 March with Pete Skinner to determine how best to go about letting of the Northern Fields for the first year or two while we make plans for the next phase. Richard Cottle has also been in contact with the Forestry Commission (FC) regarding grants that may be available to develop woodland and wildlife habitats on site. An initial view from the FC is that the Northern Fields would appear to be a suitable site, where woodland could provide both a wildlife and amenity function.

The next meeting of the combined WMWG and JPFRG is on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022

From Richard Cottle, Chair WMWG – 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2022