

## **Update from the Weir Meadow Working Group (WMWG) and Joint Projects Fund Raising Group (JPFRG)**

Since the last update (the annual report, 11<sup>th</sup> May, which incorporated discussion and actions from the meetings on the 28<sup>th</sup> March and 9<sup>th</sup> May), one additional meeting of the WMWG and JPFRG has taken place on the 13<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Fundraising and Borrowing**

Fundraising has continued following the loan application to PWLB. The fete on 4<sup>th</sup> June raised in region of £2,000 for the Weir Meadow fund at the bar and Pimms tent. Ide Rovers FC raised £313 for the WM fund at a game against Tedburn.

At the meeting on the 13th June, Nick Bradley reported that the IPC had received final approval from the PWLB for their loan of £152,282. The funds were duly received by the IPC on the 16th June. The interest rate is now fixed at 3.45% for 50 years. This meant that the annual repayments would be £843 more than predicted when the application was made in March, when the rate was 1.98 %. However, the PC has amended its 2022/23 spending budget to absorb this additional cost.

Stuart Brooking has been in contact with the Football Association. Grants may be available for drainage and improvements up to £25,000 once the land is owned and provided the club plays in a league (which it does)

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

Pete Skinner has very kindly taken on the task of producing and circulating particulars for finding a tenant for the Northern Fields. At the meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> June he drew members' attention to some key points:

- There is no water or fencing in the N Fields – a significant fact when looking for a tenant
- The particulars are as broad as possible to encourage tenders (e.g. horse grazing)
- The steep, rough section (c 3 acres) overlooking the cricket pitch has been excluded
- Access from College Lane is relatively tight for modern contract machinery
- Letting to multiple private owners – e.g. several different horse owners would not be recommended
- Fencing the fields ourselves would be expensive at £5 a metre, though grants could be available to a tenant.
- A perimeter strip for walkers (including dogs) would form part of any agreement
- The PC can choose the tenant (without stating criteria or reasons) and does not have to give an agreement to the highest bidder.
- The planting of maize should be prohibited as it needs large machinery to harvest it, which would need to come in across Weir Meadow; and maize harvest is in the autumn, when conditions are wet risking damage to the Meadow.
- The fields are steep and better suited to pasture than to arable crops because of run off and soil erosion.

Following discussion about the pros and cons of a potential tenancy term, access arrangements and the timing of the tendering process it was decided to reduce the

length of the tendering process to four from six weeks with the deadline for tenders set for the 15<sup>th</sup> July,

As the decision to delay exercising the option agreement until informal tenders had been received was not in line with letter of the resolution passed by IPC on 30<sup>th</sup> May, Nick Bradley wrote to councillors explaining this change of plan to the order of events.

Nick Bradley wrote to the current tenant (Richard Parr) and the Church Commissioners (via Strutt & Parker) to gain permission for potential tenants to walk the ground. This was provided by both parties.

The next scheduled meeting for the combined WMWG and JPFRG is on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, at which received tenders will be discussed and recommendations made in time for the next IPC meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> July.

From Richard Cottle, Chair WMWG – 12<sup>th</sup> July.