

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

## **1. Introduction**

Since the last update (9<sup>th</sup> January 2024) there have been two meetings of the WMWG and JPFRG on 15<sup>th</sup> January and 11<sup>th</sup> March.

## **2. Chair**

Richard Cottle has chaired the working group for over two years and following a discussion, Peter Skinner was invited to take over this role. Richard Cottle remains on the committee and was thanked for his time and effort.

## **3. Sports pitches**

Grass growth and establishment is good albeit there are small areas of rust. The topsoil remains saturated and until it dries out, grass cutting and any other fieldwork cannot take place. It is hoped that mowing will start in mid to late April by County Grounds Maintenance (CGM) who undertook the field work and drilled the grass seed last autumn. The first two cuts will each cost £390.00 plus VAT comprising a cut, rake and removal of the clippings. Two such cuts and removal of the grass should bring the grass down to a manageable height following which it will hopefully not be necessary to collect the grass with each cut then costing £140.00 plus VAT until the cricket club take over – see below. Regular mowing will be essential to develop a good sward – suggested once per week during May and June when growth is at its fastest.

## **4. Lease and ground maintenance arrangements**

The contractual arrangements between IPC, the cricket club and the football club have been the subject of a tremendous amount of work with a series of draft leases, contracts etc. created by David Howe including a number of meetings over the winter period. These documents are now in their final stages with David Howe having produced an Interim Report for IPC dated 11<sup>th</sup> March. In short, it is proposed that the cricket club take a one year lease starting when the artificial wicket is laid for a rent of £500.00 per year in arrears. The lease will cover the cricket pitch area only. The cricket club have agreed to mow not only the cricket pitch but also the entire field (including the football pitch) subject to IPC providing a suitable mower. It is proposed that the football club do not have a lease as such but rather a licence agreement allowing them to hire the football pitch on a game by game basis.

The purchase of a mower is seen as the next objective. Whilst the cricket club does have a mower, it is not large enough to take on the mowing of five to six acres. There is the possibility of grant aid for the purchase of a mower via Sports England Small Grant Scheme with the window opening for bids in April. WMWG resolved to pursue this funding avenue, will seek advice on the type of mower required and begin work on generating a grant application. If a mower is purchased a lockable container will also have to be purchased in which to store it.

## **5. National Lottery Fund**

A previous grant application to the National Lottery Fund was successful with an award of £9,825.00 having been paid to IPC approximately 14 or so months ago. The award was based on the following;

350 metres of fencing at £11.00 per metre - £3,850.00.

500 tree whips - £1,000.00.

Labour to prepare ground and plant trees - £1,850.00.

Two memorial benches - £1,000.00.

Interpretation board and signage - £1,500.00.

15 x bird nest boxes and 10 x dormouse nest boxes - £625.00.

It is a requirement that this grant money is spent by August 2024 with a six monthly extension having already been granted by the National Lottery. Planting of the whips can only take place next winter and until the grass is cut, the pitches laid out, the car park boundary identified etc. it is difficult to know where to plant. On reflection, WMWG thought it would benefit the community more if £1,000.00 was transferred from the tree budget to the bench budget thus increasing the bench budget to £2,000.00. Further, as Weir Meadow is a recreation ground, rather than plant a large number of trees, it was felt more appropriate to pre-order container grown, specimen trees (approx. 10 – 15 in total) and plant these out next winter with the Northern Fields woodland designer (see below) having an input on the type of trees and their location.

Rachael Herbert sourced a number of quotes for benches and following her recommendation, WMWG agreed to purchase ten A-frame picnic tables and two benches for a total cost of £2,213.00. These tables and benches are the same spec. as those in the Orchard. Some could be placed in Northern Fields. The excess £213.00 is to be funded from the money raised at the pancake breakfast (£300.00).

Andrew Ash sourced three quotes for fencing approximately 150 metres alongside the stream with WMWG accepting his recommendation that APR Fencing be instructed. They provided the lowest quote of £3,150.00 plus VAT and are known to undertake work to a good standard. This quote includes installing a three metre wooden gate into the triangular field adjacent to Plane Trees. There remains £700.00 of the grant allocation for fencing which could be spent extending the fence a further 60 or so yards along the entire boundary with the stream.

Richard Cottle has organised the purchase of fifteen bird nest boxes and ten dormouse nest boxes which have been delivered and will be put up shortly. Total cost was £615.00 against grant of £625.00.

Design of the interpretation board and general signage with a grant of £1,500.00 is to be undertaken shortly before the grant deadline.

## **6. Artificial Wicket**

The cricket club wish to install an artificial wicket which will extend the season by a couple of months when ground conditions would otherwise not be suitable. Andrew Ash has prepared a paper for IPC summarising two quotes and the cricket club's recommendation that the firm "Slatters" be awarded the contract for a total cost of £11,917.00 plus VAT. The

cricket club is providing the funding for these works via IPC. David Howe has drafted contractual paperwork being part of his interim report to IPC noted above.

## **7. Car Park**

With the purchase of a mower the priority, WMWG consider the creation of a car parking area to be the second priority. The most appropriate location is on the left as you enter Weir Meadow comprising a rectangular area measuring approximately 40 metres x 12 metres deep; total area 480 square metres. Previously, estimates for a full spec. car park (something you might see in a town centre) were sought with prices coming in at around £100,000.00. Peter Skinner sought quotes from a company called “Gridforce” who supply a reinforced plastic grid system or pavers as a “grass-reinforcement system”. This is a hexagonal grid paving system that is rolled into existing grass providing a hardened surface that stabilises the topsoil sufficiently to take light traffic. The car park would only be used when ground conditions permit from say April / May to September / October each year. This type of grid paving system does not require planning permission, is permeable, environmentally friendly with grass growing through it such that it will require mowing just like the rest of the field. The cost for the basic version is currently £6,072.00 plus VAT rising to £6,912.00 plus VAT for a non-slip version – assuming the whole 480 square metres is covered. It is recommended that the non-slip version is purchased. This could also be used for other activities such as fitness club etc. which may also help in applying for grant aid. Basic construction details and photographs are attached.

## **8. Northern Fields Community Woodland**

Nick Bradley has gained a Stage 1 grant from the Woodland Creation Planting Grant scheme for the design of woodland within the Northern Fields. Local woodland designers were recommended with two quoting for the work; Jim White and Julia Matthews. Stage 1 of the works comprise an initial desk top study and basic design with Stage 2 focusing on the design of the woodland itself and community consultation. Estimated that Jim White’s costs net of grant would amount to approximately £6,340.00 with Julia Matthew’s cost net of grant amounting to approximately £1,700.00. Julia Matthews is a qualified landscape architect and a member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters and as such, given the cost difference, WMWG recommends instructing Julia Matthews to proceed with the initial, Stage 1 desk top work.

## **9. Weir Meadow - Grand Opening**

WMWG would like to organise a “Grand Opening” of Weir Meadow in late summer / early autumn. Suggested that this would include a community cricket match and football match, a bar-b-que and other fund-raising events. Peter Skinner agreed to form a subcommittee to organise.

## **10. Next Meeting**

The next combined meeting of WMWG and JPFRG is scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> April.

**Peter Skinner 12.03.2024.**

**END**