

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

1. Introduction

Since the last update (8th May 2024) there have been two meetings of the WMWG and JPFRG on 3rd June and 15th July 2024.

2. Sports pitches

Mowing is taking place on a weekly basis albeit a couple of weeks were missed due to rain. Establishment of the sports grass seed has been variable due to the exceptionally wet winter and spring. Given the resultant ground conditions, it is fortunate that we have not had to re-drill the entire field. The grass is now tillering and subject to a continuation of the current mowing regime and a heavy roll (due shortly) the grass sward should provide a reasonable playing surface. Soil samples will be taken later in the summer to establish whether or not a spring dressing of compound fertiliser would be beneficial.

3. Lease and ground maintenance arrangements

Documentation for the lease of the cricket pitch area only to the cricket club has been drawn up and is awaiting signature. In short, the cricket club has been granted 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 has 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 suitable mower is the next objective. Nick Bradley has lodged a grant application to Sport England via its “Movement Fund” which is focused on supporting informal exercise and recreation. The fund offers grants of up to £15K. Initially, it was thought that purchasing a second-hand tractor mower would be the most cost effective and appropriate option. However, this type of machine would only be able to mow grass. On further consideration, it is thought that a multi-purpose tractor mower with a detachable mower deck mounted either on the front or the rear powered via a PTO shaft would be more useful. The mowing deck can be switched with other decks or devices such as a flail for example. The machine could then be used by IPC for flailing paths etc. in the orchard, Northern Fields and so on. Other attachments are available such as brushes, hollow tine decks for drainage etc. A decision on the grant application is expected in the near future. Should this prove successful, the aim is to purchase a suitable machine in the autumn when second hand prices should be at their most favourable. A lockable container will also have to be purchased in which to store it.

Trespassing and illegal occupation of the field remains a concern and to that end, the committee recommends the installation of two, small sized, square section bollards adjacent to the entrance gate. With installation costs the total cost will approach £1,500.00. Final quotes and confirmation of the exact costs are being sought for IPC approval.

4. 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 18 or so months ago. To date, three of the five grant aided items have been purchased or completed comprising the picnic tables and bench, nest boxes and fencing at a total net cost of £6,113.17. There remains an interpretation board and the specimen trees to plant which have been costed in the total sum of £3,140.00 and are presently being ordered. A copy of the specimen tree planting scheme is attached. The total net cost therefore amounts to £9,253.67 against the grant awarded at £9,825.00 giving a surplus of £571.00. Subject to clarification regarding the interpretation board quote, it may be that this surplus will be put towards installation of the interpretation board.

5. PitchPower FA Fund

The position of the corner flags for the football pitch have been established and it is hoped the football pitch itself will be marked out in the next fortnight. Once this is done, Stuart Brooking will be in a position to apply for grant funding from the Football Association via its PitchPower fund. Depending on the success or failure of the Movement Fund application, this may be for a multi-purpose tractor mower or for a line marking machine or possibly an attachment for the multi-purpose tractor mower etc.

6. Artificial Wicket

Installation of the artificial wicket is due to start on 12th August 2024 at a cost of £11,917.00 plus VAT. The cricket club is providing the funding for these works and has transferred the money to IPC.

7. The Ide Revel

A grand opening is being organised for 7th September and is being called “The Ide Revel”. A flyer setting out the basic details is attached. Entry will be free to all with limited car parking charged at £5.00 per car subject to ground conditions. Sponsorship is currently being raised with the objective of covering the fixed costs prior to the day. The estimated fixed costs amount to £5,920.50 and include a marquee plus staging, security, lavatories, generator, band, entertainment, Morris dancers and food for the BBQ. To date, sponsorship of £3,600.00 has been raised (this figure includes a £1,000.00 grant from IPC and a £500.00 contribution from Ide Community Shop). Additional revenue will be raised from car parking, the bar, BBQ, the sale of reusable pint cups, a silent auction, rifle range, other activities and an on-site raffle on the day. A quiz night is taking place at the Huntsman on 28th July to raise additional funds with a raffle also.

8. Northern Fields Community Woodland

Julia Matthews and Peter Skinner met with the Forestry Commission on 10th July to inspect the Northern Fields and discuss the Phase 1 application for grant funding under the Woodland Creation Design Scheme. The project has been well received with no major problems anticipated. The first phase of the application should be approved shortly following which IPC will be able to progress to Phase 2 which includes design of the actual woodland

including layout, tree species, paths, fencing etc. Once a draft design has been provisionally agreed, it is anticipated that some form of public consultation will take place during the autumn, amendments made to the draft design and then an application lodged at the end of this year. If successful, we should know by Spring 2025 following which hard works such as paths and fencing could take place in Summer 2025 with the first stage of tree planting taking place over the winter of 2025 / 2026.

In the meantime the Northern Fields and the swale area on Weir Meadow will shortly be flailed by County Grounds Maintenance at a cost of £825.00 plus VAT.

9. Next Meeting

The next combined meeting of WMWG and JPFRG is scheduled for 19th August.

Peter Skinner 16.07.2024.

END