

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

## **1. Introduction**

Since the last update (10<sup>th</sup> September 2024) there has been one meeting of the WMWG and JPFRG on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

## **2. Sports pitches**

Mowing continued on a weekly basis until the end of September. Two soil samples were taken on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. Compared with the two samples taken last year and despite the application of lime and compound fertiliser last Autumn, the pH and nutrient status of the soil has improved only marginally. Phosphorous (P), Potash (K) and the pH levels all remain well below the optimum for good grass growth. Two possible factors; the nutrient status of the soil when IPC took possession was incredibly low and it takes years of fertiliser applications for it to recover. Secondly, last year's autumn application was followed by one of the wettest autumn/winter/springs in living memory which may have leached a certain amount of the fertiliser out of the soil. The conventional approach is to apply compound P and K fertiliser in the autumn and then a top dressing of Nitrogen (N) in the spring. In order to minimise contractor costs and the possibility of leaching, it is suggested that a complete compound (N, P and K) fertiliser along with granular lime (to increase the pH level) are all applied at the same time in Spring 2025. Please note the comments regarding cost in section 5 below.

The quality of the grass sward is acceptable but not as good as hoped. This is due to the wet winter and waterlogged ground inhibiting germination, the wet spring which did not allow mowing until the grass was thigh high and the poor nutrient status of the soil. Meadow grass has outcompeted and dominated the sports grass seed and re-established itself to some extent as it is the natural grass for this type of field and thrives in a low nutrient environment. As nutrient levels improve and ground maintenance works take place (aerating etc), it is hoped the position will reverse with the sports grass seed becoming dominant.

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

The lease to the cricket club has been completed as per the last report.

The committee investigated the merits and costs of a path around the eastern perimeter of Weir Meadow together with a timber boardwalk over the swale area as this area becomes very wet and boggy in the winter. The purpose would be to encourage dog walkers etc. to use the path around the perimeter when the field is lying wet. Three quotes were sought ranging from £15,850 to £17,000. The committee agreed to put this matter on hold for the time being as funds are limited and the purchase of a mower is the priority. If the ground becomes too wet to walk on, then we can put up a temporary fence guiding walkers along the eastern perimeter like last year.

Extra security at the entrance gate has also been discussed by installing bollards. For the same reason as above, the committee agreed to put this option on hold for the time being.

#### **4. National Lottery Fund**

In the last report there were two outstanding items paid for by the National Lottery Fund grant of £9,825. Firstly, a dozen or so specimen trees. These have been bought and are being planted adjacent to, or in the swale area, near the northern boundary of Weir Meadow on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Secondly, an interpretation board was installed near the pedestrian footbridge entrance into the field. These two items conclude this grant award.

#### **5. PitchPower FA Fund**

Four applications for grant aid have or are about to be lodged with this awarding body as follows;

- I. Line Marker – a free line marker has been approved (some time ago) but we still await delivery. Stuart Brooking has been asked to chase this up as all the work done late summer marking out the football pitch has disappeared and will have to be done again.
- II. Goals – this application was approved on 25<sup>th</sup> October with grant awarded at 61% giving a net cost to IPC of approx. £1,008.00. Delivery is expected soon.
- III. Tractor mower, associated machinery and a container – a capital grant application was lodged three weeks ago. The cost of a suitable tractor (John Deere 303E), associated mowing and field maintenance equipment, and a container is approx. £40,132. It is hoped a grant award of approx. 75% will be made equating to £30,099 meaning that the net cost to IPC is £10,033. A decision is pending. Alternatives to IPC buying the equipment were discussed at our last meeting. The cricket club mower is old and too small to cut the whole of Weir Meadow. There would also be the cost of IPC hiring the cricket club mower. Employing contractors presently costs £140.00 per cut – this is very cheap and likely to increase next year. If IPC continued with contractors, and allowed for 25 cuts per year at say £175.00 per cut, the total cost to IPC would be £4,375.00 per year. The “pay back” period for IPC purchasing the equipment net of grant is therefore approx. 2 years 4 months.
- IV. Grounds’ Maintenance – this is a grant over a six-year period where IPC has to spend at least £2,666 per year on ground maintenance works for each of the six years – a total of £15,996. Grant is awarded on a sliding scale paying the full £2,666 in years 1 and 2, £1,778 in years 3 and 4, and £888 in years 5 and 6. Total cost net of grant to IPC over 6 years would be £5,332. The application is ready to submit subject to IPC approving a Service Level Agreement with Ide Green Rovers AFC – another bureaucratic monstrosity but with very grateful thanks to David Howe and all his time in drafting the document.

#### **6. Artificial Wicket**

This was laid on 19th and 20th September and paid for in full by the cricket club.

## **7. The Ide Revel**

This took place on 7<sup>th</sup> September and despite the very wet weather, feedback was entirely positive. A net profit of £3,640.33 was achieved. It is hoped this sum can be ring fenced and used for next year's Revel.

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

CGM flailed the Northern Fields a couple of months ago and have been instructed to box trim the hedges.

Following a public consultation in the village hall on 10<sup>th</sup> October the Stage 2 grant application was lodged by IPC's consultant, Julia Matthews on 1<sup>st</sup> November with 26 documents attached. It basically comprises a design for the woodland including layout, fencing, tree protection, species, hard works etc. If approved, hard works could start in summer 2025 (paths, fencing etc.) and planting in winter 2025 / 2026.

## **9. Planning Permission**

All planning conditions regarding the conversion of Weir Meadow to a recreation ground have recently been discharged by the Teignbridge planning officer. My understanding is that the planning permission for a club house etc has lapsed but this is of no matter as it is a medium to long term aspiration.

## **10. Next Meeting**

The next combined meeting of WMWG and JPFRG is scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**Peter Skinner 14.11.2024.**

**N.B.: All prices quoted are net of VAT.**

**END**