

Houghton Field Association – Trustees report 2015/16

Repairs, maintenance and improvements

We have continued our policy of making small repairs and improvement to the field and its facilities. This has included repairing and painting the outside wood work on doors and windows and the ceiling in the main clubroom area. We replaced the small waste bin in the playground with a larger one with a lid. This may seem a small thing but it has kept the playground much tidier. We have also had the hedges trimmed and we will be doing this regularly in the future to keep the field boundaries tidy and accessible.

These items were financed from HFA funds and from a grant from Houghton PC. We are grateful for this support and for the PC continuing to pay for the grass mowing.

We repaired the slide mound in the playground. This now has a reinforced concrete base which should resist the cracking that occurred previously. This was financed from Parklife funds and a grant for Harborough DC Community Fund.

The biggest project has been the new drainage system for the main football pitch. We have financed this with grants from Sport England and the Playing Fields Legacy fund. Work was carried out in the late autumn and fortunately we had good growing conditions for the new grass. For the whole of the 2015/16 football season this pitch has been out of use. The junior and senior football clubs had to work round this between them and including hiring pitches elsewhere to play some of their matches. We thank them for their co-operation and for paying some of these extra costs from their club funds. Also many thanks to Iain Munro who has led this project from the start.

The contractors and consultants for this project expect to hand over the pitch ready to play on by early September so we should be back to normal as the 2016/17 season starts.

Finances

We achieved a surplus of income over expenditure of over £2,000 over the year. We now have a stable financial position with a reasonable cash reserve to cover for unforeseen repairs etc. and to continue to make small improvements. The surplus was achieved through both controlling expenditure to essentials and higher revenues.

Revenue generation

Along with our income from the football clubs, tennis club and other regular users of the facilities we are achieving a gradual increase in income from hiring the pavilion. As well as the Scarecrow Festival we had a good result from our Talent Auction organised by Linda Pickard. Due to an unexpected clash with other village events there was a low attendance but those that did come got some real bargains. We raised nearly £1,100 on the evening plus a further £700 of match funding from Santander. Thanks to Ollie Franks for organising that. We will repeat the Talent Auction this year on 7th October. Put this date in your diaries now! And once again the 100 club did a superb job, raising £1,200 to help keep YOUR playing field going. (See how you can help below)

Grant Funding

As already reported we received a number of different grants during the year. However looking forward we have a difficulty with using grant funding. Most grant bodies want to fund specific projects. However whilst there are number of areas in and around the pavilion that need attention it is difficult to justify spending HFA or grant money on them if we are going to renew the pavilion. For this reason we did not apply for a PC grant for 2016/17.

Pavilion

We have had a structural engineer inspect the pavilion (free service through ProHelp). He reported that he could identify no immediate areas of concern which is good news. However

- This type of construction has a life of around 60 years, so less than 10 years left.
- As time goes on expensive problems likely to occur. For example roof trusses bowed due to timbers being too far apart. Felt roof felt needs replacing every 15 years, which hasn't been done for some time). One of the upright timbers is beginning to rot and others which are not visible may also be beginning to rot.
- Difficult to refurbish current building to provide type and standard of facilities needed now and in the future.

Based on this report the committee has agreed in principle that the current building should be replaced with a new building. In the meantime we would still carry out repairs, maintenance and small improvements on the current building.

We are now consulting with the existing main users of the pavilion to find out what facilities they would want in a new building. Once this is complete we will consider how to consult with the whole village. We are also working with a local architect who is helping with initial plans and costings. We need information on this before we can seriously explore suitable sources of funding.

How you can help

Frankly we can do with all the help we can get. Here are some ways to get involved:

- Join the committee, or if committees are not your thing then simply become a volunteer to offer your time and talent to help us.
- We are especially looking for someone to help with exploring sources of grant funding and making applications.
- We welcome any ideas from anyone for fund raising events but we need the people resources as well to make them happen.
- Some really helpful people already pick up litter on their own initiative. If more of us did this when we visit the field we could keep it much tidier.
- If you are not a member then join the 100 club. It only costs a £1 per month with the chance of winning much more than you pay in. If all the households in Houghton who are currently not members were to join, we would have an additional £3,000 p.a. of reliable income (*contact Sue Sutton at houghton100club@gmail.com tel: 01162417322*)
- Offers of practical help to carry out with repairs, maintenance and improvements are welcome.
- If you need a venue for a meeting, party or similar event consider hiring the pavilion. (*Contact Steve Goodman at steve.goodman@zen.co.uk tel: 01162418229*)

Remember the playing field belongs to the village and if we all do a bit to keep it tidy, maintain and improve it, it will remain a real asset for us all for years to come.

Steve Goodman - Chairman HFA