

17th November 2023

Charsfield Recreation Ground Chair's report

Summary

1. 2023 has been a challenging year for fund raising. However there were some notable contributions.
 2. The new toilets have finally been commissioned
 3. ROSPA report
 4. Recreation ground maintenance
 5. Tennis
 6. Suffolk Wildlife Trust report
 7. Looking ahead 2024
1. **Fundraising**

Charsfest

- Lack of human resources resulted in Charsfest being cancelled. There were too few volunteers available to erect marquees, run events oversee stalls etc.

Other events

- Notable contributions from our community – Thank you all for your support

Particular thanks go to:-

- Margaret Reeve who organised the village garage sale
- Val Voltz who organised the golf day
- Dave and Joyce Whitley for the Sunday "Banger Brunch"
- Andy Wyatt for the Autumn quiz
- Donations from CADS and individuals from the community

2. Toilets

- The new toilets have been commissioned. This gives us a valuable asset which it is hoped will boost the overall usage of the recreation ground, including by the local school which has been notified of our new status.
One issue that the toilets bring is the annual standing charge for the utilities which mean a significant cost, even without their use.
- Toilet access – access is by keys that will be stored in a key cabinet with combination access.
- Charsfield school has been contacted indicating to them that the recreation ground now has toilet facilities. It is hoped that this will encourage further use of the recreation ground by the school.

3. ROSPA report

- The ROSPA report identified a number of issues with the children's play area equipment. One "Amber/Red" issue identified related to the rope climbing frame. The report suggested that consideration be taken to decommission the equipment before end of life. The condition of the main post was known about, however it appears some of the remaining

posts are also deemed to be deteriorating. A decision was taken by the committee to take the apparatus out of use. This decision was made in conjunction the committee exploring a possible grant to replace the climbing equipment with a new climbing frame.

- The wooden supports of the infants' swings were also identified as decaying and although not critical at this stage will need refurbishment in the near future.
- The rubber chippings base also needs to be improved/replaced. This was highlighted again in the ROSPA report.
- The remaining wooden edging was also highlighted and it is obvious by inspection that these need replacement soon.
- Looking at the report overall and by visual inspection it appears that a number of the children's equipment are showing their age and will require replacement in the future. Meanwhile a number of maintenance tasks and repairs need to be undertaken, either by volunteers or by contractors.
- Potential plans for the future include fencing off the children's play area to prevent dog fouling and wild animal damage..

4. Recreation ground maintenance

- This year has presented a different challenge to previous years. From a weather perspective in previous years it has tended to be drier (especially last year). This year we have had a lot more rain. This has been a blessing in that the managed spraying and fertilisation has led to a much thicker/lush grass area. Weeds have also been suppressed. However the conservation area has seen more weeds and brambles and the children's play area has seen encroachment of thistles and blackthorn. We had a number of complaints in relation to the weeds in the children's play area.
- The conservation area has been a bone of contention in the village, depending on individual viewpoints. There is also an issue with access from St Peter's Close as this passes though the conservation area. Suffolk Wildlife Trust has been consulted and a report has provided us with guidance and suggestions on how we might improve the management of the area, including the weeds, especially the thistles and ragwort. Further details are addressed in section 5 Suffolk Wildlife Trust report
- Sheds – the smaller shed's floor is rotten and it has been discussed whether it would be best to remove and to relocate important items into the tennis shed.
- The tennis shed needs maintenance, including wood treatment and attention to the board cladding (Spring of 2024)

5. Tennis

- 23 annual household permits have taken out for this season (24 in 2022), and a good number compared to previous years.
- The spread of the permits obtained this year was unusual as so many came later on in the summer - 13 by end of April and just 1 in May/June, then 9 more July to October.
- The booking system using a WhatsApp group continues to work well. Based on the evidence of this, it would appear that about 25% of permit holders play a lot, 50% just a few times (3 or less) and the remainder never used the court at all!
- The courts (tennis and MUGA) do need more attention than I have given this year (John Fox), particularly weed removal. They are essentially in good condition and will likely last until 2025 before needing their next professional maintenance - cleaning and minor surface repairs.
- Grateful thanks must go to Richard Crone for running Pickleball sessions during the second half of the summer on the MUGA, Monday evenings and Saturday midday.

6. Suffolk Wildlife Trust report

The report focuses on 4 main themes

- *Wildlife habitat* – The report identified a number of **Species of principal importance NERC Act Section 41**, in the adjoining area (radius of 1km), including the hedgehog, small heath butterfly, dunnoek, house sparrow, linnet, starling, skylark, yellow hammer, bullfinch. **Birds of Conservation Concern, red listed** included the swift and greenfinch.
- *Wildflower area* – the “barren area” to the north of the pathway between the tennis courts and St Peter’s Close was identified as an ideal area for wild flowers. Detailed advice on how to manage the area was provided within the report.
- *Weed management* – the report suggested how thistles near to the path and towards St Peters Close could be managed and the wider area indicated as a conservation area.
- *Sign posting and events* – the report suggested that sign posts could be erected at the main entrances and adjacent to the pathway running alongside the conservation area. The purpose would be to show the diversity of wildlife. It was also suggested that a small number of events such as Invertebrate hunts, butterfly counts, moth nights, bird watches, bat nights, flower spotting etc could help the wider community and local school connect with biodiversity on “their doorstep”.

7. Looking ahead 2024

- Charsfest- volunteers have been asked to support next year’s Charsfest. We have a number of younger members of the community that have indicated their support. The date for next year’s Charsfest will be agreed at the next committee meeting so that people can put the date in their diaries.
- Access from St Peter’s Close – pathway incomplete. The original planned access was to the northwest corner of recreation ground. The path was to be provided by Park Properties and was to intersect the existing tarmac path. However this changed to the current access with Park Properties provided the path to approximately the same length. This has led to a gap between the toilets and access to St Peter’s Close that has not been laid with a suitable surface. An estimate has been received and this task is under consideration.
- Fence – the fence is broken along the south border close to the storage sheds. The work to do this by volunteers has been estimated and now needs to be progressed.

**CHARSFEST 2024 WILL BE HELD ON 15TH JUNE –
MAKE SURE THE DATE IS IN YOUR DIARY. MANY
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR A VARIETY OF ROLES.**