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Introduction

Groundwork Pennine Lancashire is one of the largest regeneration charities operating in Lancashire, established on 1st July 2007 as a result of the merger of the three East Lancashire Groundwork Trusts: Rossendale which was established in 1983, Blackburn which was established in 1990 and East Lancashire which was established in 1994.

Groundwork is a member of the national Federation of Groundwork Trusts and benefits from access to a significant knowledge, skills and support network that this provides.

Groundwork has many years collective experience in planning and delivering community based regeneration projects across Pennine Lancashire including environmental improvement projects, play areas, sports facilities, nature trail and woodland creation / management and environmental improvements within the street scene – community gardens, alley gating, bin storage, public / private space.

Projects have been supported by a wide range of public and private funding sources including English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), BIG Lottery, Landfill Tax, Barclays Spaces for Sports, Lloyds TSB, as well as charitable trusts and local authority grants.

Groundwork was commissioned by Whitworth Sports Council to explore improvement proposals to the pitch at Leavengreave and to the land at the back of Millgate (See illustration A). Whitworth Sports Council's initial ideas consisted of a 3G artificial pitch, complete with changing and parking facilities at Leavengreave and a grass pitch with other play facilities at the Back of Millgate.

Illustration A: Leavengreave Pitch and Back Millgate Area



A process was agreed with Whitworth Sports Council to conduct the first phase of the study and would include an initial desk review of current information, establishing the need, provision of sketch designs / associated cost estimates and communication of these designs with local council officers, councillors and stakeholders. Possible funding sources would also be provided.

Desk Research

Current State of Pitch

The current pitch is owned and maintained by Rossendale Borough Council, the pitch is marked for rugby and there are rugby ends erected lengthways – see illustration B.

Illustration B: Leavengreave Pitch



Illustration C: Back Millgate



However, the pitch has suffered from the very wet summers over the last 3 years and drainage is very poor rendering the pitch unusable for several months of the year.

Demographic Profile

Leavengreave Pitch is within the Facit & Shawforth ward in the town of Whitworth, Rossendale. It serves the populations of Facit & Shawforth and Healey & Whitworth, though teams have been known to travel from neighbouring towns of Rochdale & Bacup. The overall population has seen a steady growth since 2001 and also has a higher than average proportion of its population in the youngest 0 – 14 age group and a smaller percentage of people over retirement age than is the norm.

Past Reviews:

Open Space Review (Rev B Jan 08), Rossendale Borough Council:

Its vision states: "Our vision for Rossendale's sports pitches will provide high quality, multi-use sports pitches with at least three pitches per site, with playing surfaces that are capable of sustaining at least two games and one training session per week throughout the year and having appropriate drainage."

The National Playing Fields Association suggests an outdoor sport provision of 1.6 hectares per 1000 population within Rossendale, this equates to 105ha. Current provision stands at 56ha (for adequate sports pitches). However, it goes on to state that they are committed to improving the facilities at existing sites and to provide shower and changing facilities where appropriate in newly created facilities.

Playing Pitch Assessment 2003, Rossendale Borough Council: None applicable - team and pitch make up has changed since publication.

Establishing the Need

In February 2009, a meeting was convened between current users of pitches within Whitworth and the local neighbourhood officer from Rossendale Borough Council. It was essential to know whether pitches in Whitworth are supplying demand.

Rugby (Whitworth Spartans)

Set of 2 teams, 16 – 18 years and older team. However the 16-18yr team has drifted away due to poor quality pitches and continually having to cancel matches.

Currently use the Leavengreave pitch every other Saturday afternoon for league matches. The Spartans currently train in Rochdale as there are no adequate facilities in Rossendale / Whitworth as they need floodlights. In the summer, they often use Leavengreave and sometimes Whitworth High. However, pitches at the school and Leavengreave are in a very poor state with poor drainage, often waterlogged from mid October. Leavengreave is perceived as neglected, dog fouling, lack of dog waste bins, waterlogged, without changing facilities and this means that many members have to get changed in their cars – leaving mud everywhere.

Football (Whitworth Juniors)

Pitches available to them; John St, Anselms, Leavengreave, High School. Currently do not use Leavengreave and there aren't any available pitches within Whitworth due to poor drainage. Currently using Maden Rec, though this is causing tensions with the local football team. At the moment they have 10 teams that operate, 6 teams require a full size pitch whereas 4 teams could utilise smaller pitches. This has led to the 15/16yrs team playing all their games away from home. Currently use high school gym (9 teams) and a gym at Falinge (1team) for training. Every week, there is a large demand for pitches with 4 teams having a home game.

Football (Whitworth Valley)

Currently play at Rawstron St where they play every other week.

Football (Red Lion)

Play at the High school but they have only been able to get 5 games this season because of the poor state of the pitch.

It became quite evident that there are passionate sports people in Whitworth who are willing to give up their free time to support and train young people and to provide opportunities to participate in organised sport. However they are continually frustrated by the lack of suitable competitive and training facilities within Whitworth. Whitworth's Area Officer was able to confirm the addition of a 'verti drainer' – a specific piece of kit that improves the drainage and is to be deployed by Rossendale Borough Council from March 2009.

Rugby has specifically suffered from lack of suitable playing pitches as both the High School pitches and Leavengreave are often water logged and unplayable. Football & rugby suffers from a lack of suitable evening training facilities, again the pitches are often waterlogged without suitable changing and lighting facilities.

Discussion centred on the possible improvements such as a 3G artificial pitch, changing and parking facilities. It would be fully enclosed and have flood lights for winter evenings. All the sports clubs agreed it was a good idea however concerns were raised about the management and security of the site. It was also agreed that the cost of using the facilities is still affordable after improvements have been made.

Initial Proposals

It was agreed to convene a meeting with Rossendale Borough Council Park's & Recreation Department, Estates Department, Whitworth Sports Council, Rossendale BC's Area Officer and Groundwork Pennine Lancashire Landscape Architect to look at possible proposals for Leavengreave and the possible improvements to the area at the back of Millgate. Following these discussions it was agreed that Groundwork would provide 2 options:

- Option 1 which would include a 3rd generation sports pitch, perimeter path, changing facilities (for teams & officials), space for 21 parked cars. It would also include a BMX / trials area at the land at Back Millgate with a gym zone and a 20m x 40m grass pitch for informal use. There would also be a link path to Whitworth Cycleway. **Appendix 1.**
- Option 2 - a 'less expensive case', this would include new drains to the existing pitch, changing facilities (for teams & officials), space for 21 parked cars and perimeter path. The area at Back Millgate would also be improved but the BMX track would be less extensive and without a gym zone. A 20m x 40m grass pitch for informal community use was also included. **Appendix 2.**

Cost estimates have been provided as part of this:

Option 1 – total cost £1,138,544.15. This includes landscape fees for project management but does not include VAT.

Option 2 – total cost £450,891.00. This includes landscape fees for project management but does not include VAT.

Details can be found in **Appendix 3.**

For both options it was agreed that the best way forward from a management position would be to form a Trust which could raise funds for the final option and provide day to day management of the final option. For this reason it was agreed to discuss the possible transfer of title from RBC to a possible Trust.

Exploration of Proposals

The proposals were sent to Whitworth Town Council, Whitworth Sports Council, Rossendale Leisure Trust, Lancashire County Councillor for Whitworth, Rossendale Councillors for Facit & Shawforth and for Healey & Whitworth, Rossendale Borough Council officers – specifically neighbourhood, planning, estates and parks & recreation for feedback. Our concerns were not to raise expectations within the general community and agreed a response from Councillors and Officers would be more appropriate at this stage.

Feedback received has generally been very positive, in the majority of cases Option 1 is the preferred option as:

- It will provide an answer to the waterlogged pitch problems and lack of training facilities in winter.
- A third generation surface will provide a greater future income as it will be available for use more often.

Some concerns were raised in that the pitch in option 1 will be fenced off and not available for use by the local community. However, this will be counterbalanced by the improvements at Back Millgate and the provision of a perimeter path.

Concerns have also been raised by the Rossendale Borough Council Maintenance section, who are in agreement that a 3rd generation pitch would be a fantastic asset but are concerned about the maintenance costs of such a facility and should the maintenance revert to sole RBC responsibility then only a grass pitch is maintainable within current budgets.

Rossendale Borough Council Estates & Communities Departments were also in broad agreement with either Option 1 or 2. Referencing the transfer of title, it was agreed that this was something that could be brought into the discussion however, it is important to note that Leavengreave pitch may be considered as a possible housing site and as such may be a future asset to Rossendale Borough Council. They are keen to stress that this is not in their medium to long term plans – it just needs to be considered.

An important item did come to light during this exploration phase. Whitworth High School has submitted plans under the Building Schools for the Future phases 4 & 5 for a full size third generation pitch and to re-drain their other available pitches. The announcement as to whether they have been successful will be in Jan / Feb 2010. This has considerable implications for the proposals at Leavengreave. Should Whitworth High School be successful in their Building Schools for the Future bid, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to raise similar funds for an identical project due to the close proximity of sites.

Recommendations / Future Options

- Wait for the decision from Whitworth High School and Building Schools for the Future. The outcome of this decision will decide the future for the Leavengreave proposals. Should Whitworth High School be successful, large scale improvements at Leavengreave funded by bodies such as landfill tax, the lottery etc. are unlikely to fund a similar project in the near vicinity. However if they are successful consideration should be given to making the improvements at Back Millgate.
- Should the High School be unsuccessful a partnership should be formed in order to manage the process of raising funds for the project. (Partners to include members of Whitworth Town & Sports Council, Rossendale Borough Council, Rossendale Leisure Trust, Local Councillors etc)
- Local residents need to be consulted on the 2 various options and adjustments may need to be made.

- Final approvals will need to be given by Rossendale Borough Council regarding transfer of title and long term maintenance.

Funding Sources

Due to the large amount of funds that will need to be raised, it is essential that a partnership approach is employed. A constituted management committee such as a Trust needs to form in order to raise funds for such a project – or work with an existing Trust with similar aims. Many grants will only provide funds to such Trusts. However some grant funds will provide grants to local authorities so it is essential the proposals fit with Rossendale Borough Council's future aspirations for sport provision. Working with Rossendale Sport & Physical Activity Alliance to explore facilities within Rossendale as a whole will be worthwhile to provide an overarching solution and strategy for increasing the quantity and quality of pitches.

All of the funding sources listed would expect to have funding obtained from other sources and would not provide 100% of the grant.

Possible Funding Sources

Sport England set out its new funding strategy from April 2009 until March 2011 informing potential applicants for funding of the purposes, scope and operation of Sport England's grant programmes. Sport England has a maximum of £213 million per year to invest in community sport from April 2009.

Sport England's new funding strategy has been publicised – 'Funding Sport in the Community'. The strategy sets out how Sport England wants to create a world leading community sports system. This means investing their funds and working with partners to achieve three outcomes:

- Increasing regular participation in sport by one million by 2012/13 and working with the Youth Sport Trust to enable young people to access at least five hours of sport per week
- Sustaining current participation in sport by ensuring that participants have a high quality experience and working to reduce the 'drop-off' in sports participation between the ages of 16 & 18.
- Developing and accelerating talent by investing in individual sports, making sure that many more talented performers move on to elite programmes and sporting success.

Sport England has also indicated new principles for the way they provide funding. These include:

- Supporting both larger national partners and smaller community sports groups with:
 - Longer term commitment to partners (e.g. supporting county sports partnership and other partner organisations over a funding cycle rather than an annual basis).
 - Availability of small grants with simplified conditions

Sport England's Community Facilities Fund will invest £10m a year of Lottery and Exchequer money into innovative projects capable of transforming the places where people take part in leisure activities or sport. The aim of the fund is to build new or refurbish existing sporting facilities that can be sustained in the long run. The funding is for the development of the capital infrastructure. This

can include contributions to the costs of new build, modernisation and major fixed equipment where it is an integral part of the project.

Opportunities Through Sports Programme (UK)

Registered charities that wish to support sporting activities or projects which provide opportunities for people who are disabled or otherwise disadvantaged to fulfil their potential and to develop other personal and life skills can apply for funding through the Peter Harrison Foundation “Opportunities through Sports” programme. Grants will often be “one off” grants for capital projects. The Foundation will, however, also consider revenue funding for a new project or if funding is key to the continuing success or survival of an established project.

Recent projects supported through the programme include:

- A £30,000 grant to the Swadlands School to enable the school to reach its fundraising target in order to claim a Big Lottery Fund grant for a new multi-gym and dance facility, which will have wide community use;
- A £50,000 grant to the Brae Partnership towards the building and running costs of a new riding centre for people with disabilities.

The Peter Harrison Foundation operates a two-stage application process. An initial enquiry to check whether your project might be of interest to the Peter Harrison Foundation and a full application.

<http://www.peterharrisonfoundation.org/programme.htm>

Premier League / PFA Community Fund

Sports help from premiership football clubs. The Premier League and Professional Footballers Association have invested £12.9m over three years, and the Football Foundation is a key partners in the management and administration. Currently 49 projects have successfully gained grant aid from the Premier League / PFA Community Fund, all of which deal with health, education social inclusion and equalities themes. E-mail enquiries@footballfoundation.org.uk

Youth Opportunities Fund: The funds should help local authorities to meet their statutory duty to secure young people’s access to positive activities and that authorities ascertain young people’s views on provision. Capital investments through the Youth Capital Fund and Youth Capital Fund Plus are integral to the Government’s broader ambitions to improve the range and quality of places for young people and complement investments through my place. Funds delivered by Lancashire County Council.