Cricket at Stapleford Recreation Ground

**Introduction**

Following two years of mid week adults cricket played by the Stapleford Phoenix club, 2017 saw the start of children’s and youth cricket played on weekday evenings and men’s cricket on Saturdays as well as the annual Sunday village cricket match. For this great thanks is due to the Stapleford PCC.

The season itself was a great success engaging many local residents enjoying the game as detailed below. However for this success to continue into 2018 and beyond, a clear vision is needed for the maintenance and use of the square and recreation ground. This document outlines some proposals to develop that vision.

**Benefits of Cricket at Stapleford**

1. **Engagement of local children and teenagers**

Over the summer under 10s and under 15s cricket teams played on the recreation ground with the possibility of a further youth team playing next year. In total 10 fixtures were played with approximately 30 local children / teenagers (both boys and girls) involved as well as the opposition, along with parents and other family members supporting their youngsters. It is hoped that cricket training could also be held at the ground if the facilities were suitable.

1. **Engagement of local adults**

In 2017 Stapleford recreation ground hosted 6 midweek evening games (Stapleford Phoenix) and 8 Saturday league cricket games (Great Shelford Cricket Club) along with the annual village match. In total, approximately 50 local adults played in some capacity enjoying the game in addition to the opposition. Furthermore wives and children of players were actively involved along with others from the village who simply came to watch and enjoy the atmosphere. Typically 20 spectators were involved every Saturday.

1. **Income to PCC**

Hire of the pavilion and recreation ground brought in £600 to the Stapleford PCC.

**Current problems**

Unfortunately, despite the wonderful support of the PCC in purchasing the roller, the condition of the cricket square and outfield is now inadequate in that both the outfield and especially the pitch pose a serious risk of injury to players with balls bouncing erratically. This is of particular concern with children’s and youth cricket being played at the ground.

Without addressing this situation it will be extremely difficult to continue to play children’s and youth cricket at the ground because of insurance, adults will run the risk of injury and it is likely that the pitch will be deemed unsuitable for play by the cricket league. A solution therefore needs to be found to improve the safety of the square and outfield.

**Options to Make the Pitch and Outfield suitable for safe play.**

There are 2 options for the cricket square as listed below, but whichever option is chosen, work is needed on the outfield:

**Outfield**

Three aspects of the outfield need to be addressed:

1. The irregular and consequentially dangerous surface with balls deviating sharply on bounce.

Following on from the football season the surface of the recreation ground has a large number of small diverts that should be rolled out at the end of the football season. This could easily be performed at little cost with the roller after rain has softened the ground. (It is not proposed that the large undulations are addressed because of the expense involved.)

1. The large number of weeds.

Again rectification should be easily achievable at reasonable cost, but the extent of the problem is considerable such that the current state of the outfield is also not ideal for football..

1. The need to cut the outfield more regularly.

At certain times of the season, particularly in the spring and early autumn when the weather is wetter, the grass on the recreation ground has become too long to facilitate good play. Furthermore when cut the grass cuttings left on the field also affect play. Simply cutting the grass more frequently at these times would solve these problems.

**The Square – Two Options**

1. **Option 1 – Further Essential Work on the Square**

Professional advice has been sought and important work has been identified for the square subject to the approval of the PCC. This would involve the remove the large about of thatch in the pitch and preparation of a good base for the 2018 season. Such work would need to be repeated on an annual basis at the end of the cricket season. It should be noted that if this option is to be pursued, the work needs to begin as soon as possible with the autumn upon us. All costs for this work would be at the expense of the cricket clubs.

1. **Option 2 – An Artificial Pitch**

An artificial all weather pitch laid on the far edge of the square (away from the pavilion) would provide an ideal safe surface for children’s and youth cricket not necessitating any groundwork so also saving expense. Furthermore it would provide a good training surface for children’s, teenager and adult cricket.

A pledge of up to £4000 has been made by a cricket club member to pay for such a pitch and more finance may be available through further fundraising. As such none of the cost for this development would fall to the PCC. It should be noted that this option would lessen the need for groundwork on the square, but that the pitch itself would need insuring. This could be at the expense of the PCC or the cricket clubs.

A final option would be to pursue both the above suggestions aiming that the children’s and youth cricket be played on the artificial pitch and the adult games on the grass pitches which offer a higher standard of the game.

We seek the support of the PCC for either or both options so that we can put these to a joint clubs EGM planned Sunday 17th September.