

Malpas Recreation Ground Chairman's Report

August 2015 – July 2016

Introduction:

I am pleased to report that the period August 2015 to July 2016 has been a year in which has seen, arguable one of the two most significant changes to the Recreation Ground Trust since its formation occurred in 1938. The other being 1971 when the Trust became a charitable organisation.

During the reporting period, the Trustees, with support from the Committee under my Chairmanship, have through protracted and complex negotiations achieved what I believe to be a truly sustainable financial future for the Malpas Recreation Ground.

Accounts:

An audited set of accounts for the year ending March 2015 were submitted to and accepted by the Charity Commissioners in November 2015. These accounts reported a balance of £294,884 with an income of £301,750 against an expenditure of £41,691. The balance also included a liability of £34,826 which was an outstanding payment for the site uplift work completed by Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council

On a slightly depressing note, it would appear that further amounts of funding secured by Cheshire West and Chester Council through Section 106 planning conditioning for Play and Open Space contributions on other developments in the local area, will now be directed into a central pot. It is unlikely that the Trust will receive any benefit from this move.

However, the successful negotiations undertaken by the Trustees with Stewart Milne Homes, has resulted in the Trust becoming self-financing, and no longer having to ask the Parish Council to "Tax" the village residents to keep the site operational.

In addition to the £300,000 secured for the sale of an estimated 10 square meters of land, the Trust is currently benefiting to the tune of £600 per month from the rent of a piece of land for the workers compound. This income will continue until the development of the West End Farm site has been completed.

Investment:

In December 2015, funds from the sale of the strip of land were used to purchase a new four bedroom house on the West End Farm development. A letting agent was subsequently engaged and this has resulted in the property being rented out to a local family from the 23rd May this year.

I would like to record my sincere thanks to Committee Member Jenny Humes for all the work, and professionalism she has demonstrated in choosing the house fittings and pulling together a portfolio file of all the services and operational instructions for the property. I would also thank Rachael Reeves and Christine Whitehurst for their support in determining the house fittings.

Site Review

The Trust Insurance cover for the site was changed and expanded in February 2016 to include a capability to stage events on the site and to cover the building insurance on the Hughes Lane property.

The equipment uplift and associated landscaping work completed 2 years ago continues to be well received by local residents and visitors alike, with a marked increase in the number of children and adults visiting the park.

The site continues to be the venue for the popular and well attended Village Fair. The venue is provided free of charge in line with the trust principles of supporting the residents of Malpas. The Trustees and I also were involved in a number of aspects of the organisation of the Fair.

Some four years ago, I reported the presence of Japanese Knotweed growing on the verge on Tilston Road and starting to invade the recreation Ground. Cheshire West Council had failed to act in a timely manner, which has resulted in an ongoing problem. However subsequent actions by the Trustees and the Management Committee have resulted in a significant reduction of the plant. Further work to eradicate the plant completely will be carried out later this year.

Management Committee:

The previous 12 months had seen a decline in the Management Committee with a number of members resigning or retiring through changes in their personal perspectives and/or circumstances. Listed as my priority for 2015, I am pleased to report that 2015-2016 has seen a full complement of 12 committee members.

However, once again we have members stepping down, with no replacements being nominated in line with the terms of the Trust Document timescales. Finding proactive and committed individuals to co-opt on to the committee is something I believe the new committee will need address at a future date.

Future Strategy:

Some of the possible changes to be considered for 2016-2017 are:

Provide a perimeter cycle/footpath track.

Remove some scrub trees and bushes from the boundaries on the Tilston Road and Love Lane.

Improve the site boundary fencing.

The Trustees and I have no desire to compete or replicate sports and play facilities that exist or are proposed by the new large housing developments in the village.

The strategy is to develop the site much more towards that of a park with wilder green spaces on its north western perimeter.

The vision for the future is one of a well-used and maintained green space capable of being enjoyed by all residents and visitors to the village.

Chris Whitehurst,

Chairman

Malpas Recreation Ground Management Committee

6th August 2016