

Endorsement of the programme

I am Andy Smith, Wellow Sports chairman, by background a chartered accountant, former Finance Director and resident of Wellow for just over 10 years.

We wanted to start our sporting mission with a sport that all ages, genres and abilities could play - tennis, in the right setting fitted that bill.

We spoke to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) who soon bought into our vision, particularly when we almost instantly met one of their key criteria of 200 paid subscribers.

But then why stop at tennis, the whole ground is a rutted slopping field hardly used. We listened to what people had to say and became excited by their enthusiasm. We could see why the FA suggested a smoothed 7 aside football pitch and now a football group has been formed that will be ready to play matches again after a 20 year absence. Others would rather go round the jogging track and visiting the outdoor gym to improve their health and fitness. Cricket is also popular with many parents taking their children to Hinton Charterhouse for matches, so the two lane cricket nets seemed an ideal place for them to practice. An organised boules tournament has already been a great success in the car park with Councilor Butters providing some financial support, it is now incorporated into the plan.

Plans were drawn up and consultation began with all interested village organisations being involved and the Parish Council chairman organising a full village consultation evening and subsequently a village referendum. With an amazing 79% turnout and nearly a 2/3rds majority the Parish Council agreed the plans.

A major fund raising activity commenced. Sport England's Inspired Facilities grant for £50,000 was a ringing endorsement, particularly

when they said it was one of the best grant applications they had come across throughout the country. Big Lottery soon followed with funding for the outdoor gym equipment.

With nearly a year lapsing the LTA funding were now proving more difficult to obtain, SE had heavily criticized them for declining participation. The LTA thus turned us down saying all grant funding had to be focused on inner cities. So convinced were we of the likely high participation levels, particularly by implementing the new key fob entry system, we returned to the LTA. The system empowers people to play without so much as a gatekeeper. At an annual cost of around £30 a household, playing numbers have quadrupled for the 20+ facilities using it. We will be the first two-court facility to operate the fob system and we are please to say the new LTA chief Executive has agreed to fund us for £30,000.

I'll hand you over to Parish Councilor Debbie Clarkson speaking on behalf of Parish Councilor Dr Heather Andrews and a St Julian's School Governor.