

Playingfield Refurbishment Project - Bealings

Project Recap

Bealings Village Hall's ageing play equipment had been deemed 'unsafe' under new Health and Safety rules and most of the equipment had been removed. The swings were the only piece of equipment which remained and the main sports field had a serious slope with ageing goal posts and scrub was fast encroaching on the space available. With support from our parish councils and our county councilor Peter Bellfield the project received enough funds to carry out a feasibility study and consultation process. The result showed very strong support and commitment within the Bealings communities.

***In February 2006**, the Friends of Bealings Playingfield under the auspices of Bealings Village Hall Trust embarked on the major project to provide new play, sports and leisure facilities by appointing a project team headed by local volunteer Jenny Shaw.*

*Soon after the team appointed Giles Hill as Landscape Architect to the project and the team embarked on a major fundraising programme led by Chairman of the Trust, Roger Roseboom. During these early months all the project expenses were supported by local fundraising events organised by Malcolm Watson as well as contributions from the Bealings Parish Councils and SCC. **In May 2006**, the project received its first great fillip of a £35,000 donation from Lord Belstead's Charitable Trust towards the Multi-Sports Court.*

***By July 2007**, the design for the refurbished playing field had been approved by the community and planning approval granted by SCDC. Our plans aimed to remodel the playingfield to incorporate a central plateau for an amenity space around which there would be equipment for all ages: an Aerial Cableway for all ages, a Toddler area with a wooden maze, separate Children's Play equipment for the over 5's, an adult fitness trail, a multi-sports court and safe pathways allowing disabled access to the facilities. The overarching theme was for the equipment to blend with the rural nature of the site and allow for managed wild life areas.*

Our plan was to apply to major grant bodies such as the Big Lottery and Biffaward. Applications of this type require evidence of a rigorous business case and involve submissions at two stages - the initial "gateway" approval process followed by more detailed analysis when the final decision is made - this process can take 12 months. So our implementation strategy was to deliver some quick wins by applying to local funds for smaller amounts. Once we had successfully received first stage "gateway" approval from the major grant bodies we were able to apply to local bodies and were successful in receiving grants from the Suffolk CC, Local Network Fund, SCDC Capital Grant, Suffolk Foundation and Barclays Bank plc. These allowed us to begin delivering to plan:

***Stage 1:** With £7,000 grant from the Local Network Fund, administered by Suffolk Acre, and a contribution from SCDC's Playspace and Capital Funds we were able to deliver the first piece of play equipment: Our Aerial Cableway was opened at 12 o'clock in **April 2007**. We also refurbished the old swings in line with new regulations.*

***Stage 2:** Biffaward awarded £45,454 to our project in April 2007 and with another £10,000 from the Lord Belstead Charitable Trust we were able to remodel the playingfield and install toddler equipment and under-14s play area which was opened in July 2007.*

***Stage 3:** With the £35,000 from Lord Belstead's Charitable Trust we were able to proceed with delivering the Multi-Sports Court in the autumn. The facility was opened in **November 2007** along with its on-line booking system (bealings.ibooka.com) spearheaded by Julian Haywood Smith. Additional grants of £2,000 SCDC Sports Fund and £3,000 SCDC Capital Fund and £1,500 funds raised at local events provided the necessary on-court equipment. We held our **first 'Games on the Court' - Boxing Day 2007**.*

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Stage 4: Our application to the Big Lottery was to allow us deliver the central Amenity Space, Trim trail equipment, circular path/cycle-track, paved seating area, seats and waste bins. We submitted our final application for £45,000 to the BIG Lottery on 12th April 2007. These national funds are fiercely sought after, only 20% of Lottery applicants are successful, and although we got through the first round we heard in July 2007 that we had failed at the final hurdle when the funds went to more needy projects. Undaunted we revamped our fundraising plans and funding of the final stage was achieved through another £10,000 from the John Belstead Charitable Trust and received a further £10,000 "completion" funds from Suffolk Environmental Trust. Suffolk Foundation Trust granted us £1,000 towards the adult fitness trail equipment. And to complete the funding we followed this up with an appeal to local residents and received another £4,000. By making adjustments to the way we delivered the final stage: we applied for trees through the SCDC Parish Tree Fund, and used volunteer effort where possible, and some people donated benches. We also raised more funds through SCC and local sponsored events (Dog Show, Bealings Got Talent, Curry and Spaghetti Evenings) and received some matching funds from HSBC.

The very final piece of work involved replacing the perimeter fencing and this was all done by a team of volunteers led by Julian Haywood Smith, Keith Beaumont and Nigel Hall-Wright. A host of volunteers also helped clear the field of debris. Our implementation work is now complete and the grass seed was laid on the main plateau.

We have named the Playing Field and Sports Court after John Belstead our first benefactor and we are most indebted to his sister, Jill Ganzoni for her constant interest and support throughout the project. We were pleased that Jill was able formally Open the Playing Field on **5th May 2008**.

We are also very grateful for the excellent support we received from: Wendy Jephcote of Suffolk Acre, Clare Nagle of Rural Action East, Rupert Bragg of Suffolk Environmental Trust, Alan Biddle at Suffolk Coastal District Council and Ivan Jowers our local District Councillor and Peter Bellfield our County Councillor all of whom gave us the courage to apply for grants. Also thanks to volunteers: Ferial Evans for her excellent work in producing our regular newsletters; Margaret Wilson for her help and support as our link with the Management Committee; Charles Barrington for his advice during the early stages of grant applications. Last but not least our local fundraising team led by local volunteer Malcolm Watson whose unstinting efforts kept the project in "working" funds throughout the project by organising innovative and exciting events - we could not have done this project without their efforts. Check out the Gallery of project photos – showing the various fundraising events such as the Sponsored Bike Ride **11th June 2007**.

Project Team

The project team met once a month and reported to the Village Hall Management Committee at each key stage.

Jenny Shaw (Project Officer,) Julian Haywood Smith, Keith Beaumont, Malcolm Watson, Roger Roseboom, Eric Barnett, Charles Barrington, Margaret Wilson Rick Kerry, Sally Johnson, Jim Newbold, Ferial Evans, Nigel Hall-Wright

Finally, at the **Grand Opening** Representatives of the major grant sponsors joined with the Bealings residents with the Honourable Jill Ganzoni cutting the ribbon for the first Bealings Games.

Roger Roseboom paid tribute to the contributions made by the major sponsoring organisations and welcomed their representatives on the day:

Great Bealings were the victors of the first Bealings Games. A good time was had by all.

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Since then

In 2008 Biffaward shortlisted our Playingfield project for a National Award - the award in the Recreation Category went to Saffron Walden with their amazing Skate Park.

Urgent Repairs: Local resident generously donated £5,000 towards repair work necessitated by unprecedented levels of torrential rain which occurred late spring. With this funding we have laid turf on the main plateau, to take the brunt of future torrents. The sponsor is also supporting the repairs to car park entrance.

Boules Piste: July 2008 With the help of another grant from Peter Bellfield's SCC Locality Budget we have also installed a Boules Piste on the playingfield.

2009 : More equipment funded through SCDC Sports Fund - 7 a-side goal on main field and a free standing Basketball goal near the swings as well as a picnic bench with access for disabled.

Authors

Jenny Shaw, Project Officer and Treasurer

Roger Roseboom, Chairman Bealings Village Hall Management Committee

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