



HATT RECREATION FIELD

26th February 2020

Dear parishioners

Botus Fleming Parish Council (BFPC) wish to update all of the members of our community with regards to the Hatt Recreation Field.

As you will all know the field has been leased by the parish for over 20 years. We have for some time been in negotiations with the owners of the field and they recently agreed to sell the field to the parish. The field is 3.95 acres (1.60 hectares) and is currently valued at £70,000. BFPC have had two independent surveys carried out and both surveys concur with the valuation. The recreation field forms part of a much larger parcel of farmland. The current landowner intends to sell the farm and land, but has agreed that the recreation field be separated from the general sale and be available for purchase by the parish.

BFPC wish to purchase the recreation field in order to secure it for the parish and future generations. We feel that if we do not purchase it now, the field could be lost to us forever. We feel that there are no other suitable sites in the parish that could replace the recreation field.

The parish does not own any green spaces for sport or leisure activities. This is almost unique in Cornwall. In 2018 Cornwall Council's Sustainability Appraisal declared that the parish did not meet the standards for sustainability. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirmed that the parish did not meet the economic, social or environmental conditions for a sustainable community. The parish has very little in the way of infrastructure or services for the existing residents and unless we work together it will slowly become unviable. We fear that without some drastic changes our community may become a mere dormitory village devoid of the renewed spirit and vibrancy that has been in evidence for the past few years.

The purchase of the recreation field is in our view a real opportunity to inject some energy and enthusiasm into our community. Once owned by the parish, we would then install some up-to-date play equipment for our children and young people. Our long-term aim is to build a community centre on the site. Once again we are uniquely disadvantaged in not having a publicly owned community centre or hall. At present the only meeting space in the parish is St Mary's Church Hall, which belongs to the church, not the community. The new community centre, once built, would be almost exactly in the geographical centre of the parish, and within easy walking distance of the main centre of population.

Once we have purchased the recreation field we intend to apply for several grants, arrange crowd funding and to seek sponsorship and donations from businesses and philanthropists in Cornwall, allowing us to build a community centre of which all of us can be rightly proud. The community centre would be the hub of our parish. From educational or vocational classes to keep fit to bingo to film nights and a live music venue, its uses would be as wide ranging as our imaginations would allow.

For the past three years the Events Team has organised our 'Big Event' (this year's 75th celebration of VE Day is the fourth). The events have been exceptionally well attended, and have demonstrated what our community can achieve given the opportunity. Without the secure and permanent tenure of the recreation field we are not optimistic that our community will have the opportunity it so deserves to thrive and flourish.

BFPC does not have the £70,000 in its reserves to purchase the field outright. We as a parish would have to borrow the money. Should the parish agree to this course of action, BFPC would apply to the Public Works Loan Board for the full amount. By careful and prudent financial management we are confident that utilising the Parish Council's financial reserves along with the current level of precept income, we could settle the loan in approximately 15 years. A small increase in the level of precept may be required in future years.

A quick explanation on the 'precept'. Your yearly council tax bill includes a contribution to the Parish Council, which is known as a 'precept'. Town or Parish Councils raise revenue to help meet their spending requirements by issuing a precept. This is the total amount to be raised through the council tax from all the dwellings within the parish area. The precept is converted into an amount per council tax band and this forms part of the council tax bill. BFPC's precept for 2020/2021 is set at 9% of your total council tax bill.

BFPC is also actively applying for grants and seeking to obtain the money elsewhere. Unfortunately this is a long-term exercise and we don't feel that we can risk losing the opportunity to purchase the field as soon as possible. Should our endeavours prove successful we would be able to use any money obtained to either pay off some of the loan or to settle it in full.

Before we can apply for the loan we need to supply evidence that our parishioners support the purchase of the recreation field. With all this in mind we have produced this document that will have been delivered to every household in the parish.

We simply want to know if you support or do not support the purchase of the field. There will also be a comment box. We have set up an online survey, the link to it is - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SG82JKP>

We will reproduce this document on the BFPC website <http://www.botusfleming.org.uk> and the link to the online survey.

We will reproduce the link on the Facebook group Hatt Chat & Botus Banter.

For those parishioners that do not use IT, you have the facility to write to Botus Fleming Parish Council via the Parish Clerk at 24 Rashleigh Avenue, Saltash, PL12 4NS.

You can also telephone the Parish Clerk, Christopher Cook on 07523 005414.

Time is imperative given that the owners of the field want a firm commitment to purchase within the next two months. We do not want to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase the recreation field. As previously discussed we cannot actually apply for the loan unless we can present the evidence from you, the residents of Botus Fleming and Hatt.

The final date for you to vote and comment is Friday 13th March 2020.

We believe that the recreation field is an essential resource for the improvement of our health and well-being and will give us all a local and accessible green space. The purchase is an exciting opportunity that will allow us to plan for our future and the addition of a community centre will make us a stronger and more vibrant and sustainable community.

Many thanks.

Botus Fleming Parish Council