

SPORTS FIELD LEASE

Proposal for Avebury Sports & Social Club (“ASSC” or “the Avebury Sports Club” or “the Club”) to enter into a new lease with the National Trust in respect of the Avebury Sports Field and Pavilion

CURRENT SITUATION

- The lease is currently held by Avebury Parish Council (“APC”), on a rolling basis, assuming APC pays each year.
- The Avebury Community Sports and Recreation Committee (“ACSReC”) is a sub-committee of APC and currently manages the day to day running of the field on behalf of APC.
- ACSReC’s work is funded by a donation from APC, ongoing fundraising activities, and income generated through booking and hiring fees for the sportsfield (largely to the cricket and football clubs).
- A large amount of work currently needs doing and will continue to need doing to the pavilion – around £7,000 for a new roof alone. Given the lack of sufficient funding available to repair the roof, the problems have accelerated significantly during a wet Summer 2017.
- A Health and Safety question has been raised regarding the state of the pavilion for public use. This will only get worse as more and more timbers rot through. The National Trust are aware of these issues.
- ACSReC have spoken about a wish to create a new building that will be more appropriate for the changing needs of the community using the field – but (as a sub-committee of the parish council) is unable to access the vast majority of local and national funding targeting sports facilities.

The Objective

By transferring the lease to the Avebury Sports Club we believe that there will be more opportunity to develop the field and its facilities the way we believe they should be developed to best suit the sports and leisure needs of the community. The Sports Field would remain a village community facility and the change of stewardship would not affect the usage and enjoyment of it by anyone in the parish. It should be a seamless transition and all existing users should be represented on any management body.

The Opportunity

We feel the best solution to the current situation would be to consider a new lease in favour of the Avebury Sports Club, who are in an extremely strong position to be able take on the lease should they choose. This will achieve the twin goals of improving our collective ability to access funding for the improvement of the field and its facilities, whilst removing some of the challenges that can arise in having the site operating and used by multiple bodies.

Some background on the Avebury Sports Club is set out below.

1. LEGAL STATUS: The Avebury Sports Club is a Friendly Society, fully set up and capable of assuming such obligations. No additional legal set up costs (or time delays) would arise in assuming the obligations associated with taking on a lease, other than certain formalities such as (a) approval at a monthly Management Committee meeting, and (b) an EGM of the Club – which constitutes this evening’s business.

2. GOVERNANCE: The Avebury Sports Club is already governed by its own Constitution, a 10-person Management Committee, and three external Trustees who oversee its activities.

3. OBJECTIVES: Under its Constitution (available on request), the objectives of the Club include:

“to afford its members a focal point for social and cultural events and activities; to provide a focal point for members wishing to arrange charitable or cultural activities to support and provide appropriate facilities for local sporting organisations based in the Parish of Avebury; and, to sustain its own future and enjoy the other advantages of a club.”

4. PERMANENCY: As owners of its own building and land, a solid membership base, and with extremely low annual membership subscription fees, the Avebury Club does not foresee any issues that would result in its dissolution, or any foreseeable changes in its status which would render it unsuitable as the tenant under the sports-field lease.

5. FINANCIAL STRENGTH: Under the stewardship of Secretary Alan Blake and the current Management Committee, ASSC operates an annual surplus (profit); and (as at the date of its last accounts on 31/12/16) had a current bank cash balance of around £29,375. ASSC does not foresee any issues in meeting any financial obligations imposed by the terms of the lease, provided the existing rights around occasional use of the field for occasional fund-raising activities can be assumed.

6. LINKS WITH SPORTING ORGANISATIONS USING THE SPORTS FIELD: The Avebury Club has strong links with the two sports clubs who use the field, both of which (directly or through parents) are currently represented on its Management Committee. Of the Club's current membership (approx. 160 members), approximately 70 are also paid-up members of Avebury Cricket Club.

7. MAINTENANCE: The current maintenance contract for Avebury Sports-field is carried out by Avebury Cricket Club, which is an affiliate (through the terms of its constitution, and that of the Avebury Club) of the Avebury Club. This relationship ensures ongoing continuity of existing maintenance arrangements, without the requirement for new arrangements to be put in place.

8. SUB-COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS: The Management Committee of the Club already delegates certain activities to sub-committees, such as the Buildings Committee, Finance Committee and Entertainments Committee. Were the Club to assume the obligations of a new lease, it would be straight forward to establish a new Sports field Sub-Committee, and to include in its terms of reference any arrangements (such as specific attendees, representatives of other organisations, etc.) as might be necessary for the smooth operation of the Sportsfield.

9. RELATIONSHIP WITH LANDLORD: The Club enjoys a good relationship with the National Trust, which already covers such matters as car parking, solstice arrangements, agreements around common boundaries, and participation in mutually beneficial activities such as Avebury Day (which is largely run by members of the Club). It is assumed that this would stand the Club in good stead as a long-term tenant of the NT.

Financial Obligations

Transferring the lease would create two responsibilities for the Avebury Sports Club:

- **Maintenance & Upkeep:** Our obligation would likely be to maintain the field and its buildings in the state at which we take them on; and if appropriate, to return them to this condition at the end of the lease. Clearly, our objective would be to do much, much more than this. Funding would need to come from our own resources and through fund-raising activities and grants.
- **Annual Running Costs:** We would become directly responsible for the running costs of the field and pavilion, offsettable by any income generated through hirings, bookings and other fund-raising activities. Based on the 2016-2017 ACSReC accounts, we estimate:

- the **expense** to be around £1,600 annually (split between £1,100 of water, electricity, rabbit and mole control, and weed-killing; and around £500 for cleaning services); and
- the **income from hirings, bookings and activities** to be around £1,000 annually (excluding hiring fees paid by the cricket club)
- Annual grass cutting is carried out by Avebury Cricket Club, who contract directly with APC. In return, Avebury Cricket Club pays hiring fees back to APC. The "net" effect of all this is effectively zero.

CONCLUSION

As a part of a World Heritage Site we pride ourselves on taking care of our village and all that is in it. Sadly over time the pavilion has been forgotten and we now see the strains on a building that came to us second-hand in the 1940s.

Growth in sporting and leisure activities over the past twenty years or so are to the credit of all involved (including the village) but, with those organisations having no rights over the ground itself, raising any sort of funding has proved extremely difficult.

Since these organisations are willing to assume these responsibilities to the benefit of all, we should seize this unique opportunity to change existing arrangements for the benefit of the whole community.

We should also remember that the pavilion is the first building a visitor sees when walking into the village from the South car park, and as such should reflect what we think first impressions should be.

With ASSC becoming the home for the Cricket Club and its strong connections with sport it is the natural successor to APC to take on the lease for the field.