

## **Chairs' Report year to January 2023**

This year was the first in the last 3 that we were able to complete a full calendar of events. There have been many young families move into the village in that time and we really wanted to engage with them.

We made three organisational changes to help us

Our first and most important task was succession planning and to recruit some new trustees, generally with children who use the fields. We hosted an open village bar night in the village hall at the end of April and presented The History and Service of Speen Playing Fields to our Community (which you can see on our website.) It was extremely well received as is evidenced by the fact that we now have 5 new Trustees in Richard Johnson, Nick Ridley, Julia Gaiter, Liz Patroe and Shaun Butler.

Secondly, as part of this process, we created an extensive data base of villagers who could be called on to help with the maintenance of the fields. They were all emailed in accordance with data protection and asked if they were happy to become "Friends of the Fields." So we now have a Volunteer Army of over 250 people that we can call on for support. Unfortunately, the response from this Army to work parties has been poor and we are developing more targeted ways to get these brave citizens to help.

Our third organisational improvement was to create Roles and Responsibilities and to allocate them to the Trustees, trying to have 2 Trustees one old and one new working together, this is definitely working as evidenced by Duncan & Shaun on Field Maintenance, Liz and Jo on Communications

In terms of projects, this was very much a year of maintenance and improvement of existing facilities and equipment

When the old Hayter mower died at the beginning of the Spring, we set up a sub group to look at the various alternatives. The cost could well have been anything from £15,000 to £40,000, depending on the combination of mini tractors and cutting trailers. We also looked at outsourcing to a contractor, which would be more expensive than mowing in house. Duncan eventually found on eBay an identical machine to ours, but 9 years younger with far less use, which we bought for £2500 and Keith Jones & I collected from Durham. This machine is working well and we have kept the old one for spare parts. We also managed to get a grant from the Parish Council of £1000 towards this cost.

### **Other maintenance includes**

- Completion of Roundabout renovation £860
- A major upgrade of the Pavilion Electrics, with many thanks to Andy at a cost of £1700,
- Bike Park Buffalo board & Half Pipe repairs £1000
- Replacing the Baby swings and Posts & Sand for Pit £800
- Website Update

Our main events were more successful than ever starting with Funday, which thanks to Matt was a great day out and fundraiser, which it wasn't supposed to be!

The draw also enjoyed record support thanks to Cristina and her team of collectors, and raises over 30% of our income.

Similarly, Bonfire Night with the Menacing Missile Ship Moskva, was a huge success with a record attendance of over 600 people and record profits, thanks to Duncan, Shaun and all the builders plus the many helpers on the night. The PTA ran the BBQ & Bar and we were able to add a £500 donation to their profit on the night to help them buy new play equipment for the school. We are a small village and we believe that partnering other fundraising organisations is important. We were also able to invest to secure 3 year's future supplies of big multiple pipe Fireworks.

There was again this year a small minority of villagers who objected to the environmental impact of the bonfire and our environmental sub group will be issuing a Statement within the next month to be published in the Speen and North Dean News in April.

We planted a new Christmas tree this year, which Duncan sourced and collected from Nuneaton on a flatbed truck, complete with its own earth, and it seems to have taken well to date. We also continued with our traditional Xmas tree recycling service thanks to all who love bouncing on trees on a cold January morning.

Finally, we would like to pay our respects and appreciation to John Holmes, who was Chair of the Playing Fields for many years and was a major driving force for this Community. We owe him a huge debt and he is sorely missed.

Antony Bobroff & Matt Davies