

The Grass Roots Project
Diary of events and milestones
2000 – Present day

2000 -2005

The club continues its drive towards achieving formal FA accreditation and broad-based membership, to become a recognised community club, serving the interests of its local people. Accreditations and status are recognised via the awards contained within the Roll of Honour on the web site. Whilst the club wanted to follow the Charter Standard route in itself, it was felt that, to achieve the project goals, it would need this form of accreditation. By February 2005, the pinnacle award, Charter Standard Community Club, was achieved and celebrated.

November 2005

Initial contact was made with a grass roots club in the East Midlands who had achieved their own vision. Early lessons were learned from the initial visit, and invaluable contacts made

July 2006

Meetings and presentations made to two local Councils, to clarify what Kewford was hoping to achieve. There was full recognition that the onus would be on the club to seek and acquire its own target plot of land – which was seen as THE major hurdle for the club at this time

September 2006

After further enquiries and contacts were made with the East Midlands club, eight members of the Management Committee visited that club and were given a tour and a presentation of how the club achieved its vision and mission. This visit proved to be the real catalyst within Kewford Eagles FC towards pushing forward with its own project to achieve the same. The process adopted by that club was a model for our club to do the same. This led to the formation of the Project Steering Group in October 2006

October and November 2006

Approaches were made to different landowners in the locality, to determine whether there was any interest in leasing enough of their land. These initial approaches were rebuffed, as the landowners decided either that the initial lease amounts on offer were too small, or their interest lay in selling rather than leasing the land. This led to an increased lease offer to the then landowner of the A449 site. Whilst the then landowner was not interested in a lease deal, and preferred instead to sell the land, a prospective landowner felt that the offer represented a good-enough business deal for him to buy the land outright and then negotiate the lease deal with the club.

December 2006

The broad terms of the lease deal -the amount offered to the prospective landowner was agreed and ratified by unanimous committee vote in December 2006, and thus the club governing body formally sanctioned go-ahead for pursuing the project via the leasehold acquisition of the A449 site.

January -June 2007

Negotiations between the new landowner and club, for legal options and leasehold, culminate in the new landowner being successful with the purchase on May 31st 2007, thus clearing the way for the Project Steering Group to become actively involved.

September 2007

The option agreement for the land is finally agreed between legal representatives for the landowner and club, with a two-year option payment made, and a thirty year lease to be effective once the main 'conditions' of the agreement are satisfied -being planning permission and funding agreement to be successfully achieved.

July to December 2007

Contacts are made with the club project architects and engineers, plus further meetings are held with South Staffs local council members and Dudley MBC. Contacts are made with other local sports organisations for future use.

January to March 2008

Continued meetings between the club Steering Group, architects and engineers leads to a potential solution to the 'access challenge' (i.e. the best way to enter the property), signalling go-ahead for architects and engineers to put formal applications to South Staffs Council and Staffordshire Borough Council.

April to May 2008

Positive contacts are made, with the Sports Partnerships for Staffordshire and the Black Country, and with other local council members. In all, the ideas and way forward for the project were, at the very least, gaining good support from a number of authorities and people responsible for local Community sports development.

July to September 2008

Detailed designs for the project were now in place, working with the architects and engineers. The architects were actively canvassing on behalf of the project, and initial indications from the local council, concerning the acceptance of a suitable sports plan, on the chosen site, were very favourable.

October to December 2008

Whilst the architects made more formal submissions to the local councils, the club gave a public awareness presentation, to explain to local people what the project was about, and how it would be developed with the community in mind. Again, this message and idea gained a favourable reception from the vast majority of those attending. In addition, the message was received that, in principle, the project would receive support at the local level from those responsible for accepting plans. Whilst not yet formal acceptance of detailed plans, this was seen as excellent news and further encouragement to proceed. At this time, the credit crunch started to affect all sectors of public life, including funding bids for all forms of capital projects, in the private and public, and voluntary, Sectors.

January to March 2009

The project was put on temporary hold, largely due to messages from the FA and potential main funding bodies that all projects were being re-assessed, and all funding, across the board, was being re-negotiated. It seemed prudent, therefore, to hold back whilst the FA and other bodies deliberated about what money is available.

April to June 2009

Negotiations and dialogue were re-started with both the Regional FA and the architects, with a view to now focus on the plans for a 'pitches-only' initial development. This 'phased' approach to the Build, removing the club-house and 'allweather' facilities from the original plans, gained good Informal support from a number of parties, and on this basis, the architects were asked to draw this up for formal submission, with a target for submission by the start of quarter 4, 2009

July to September 2009

Background work to complete the details required for planning submission undertaken by the architects, the target and focus now being on achieving planning permission by the end of 2009 for a 'pitches-only' development.

October to December 2009

The final submission of plans to both South Staffs Council (the land itself falls just within the South Staffs County boundary) and Dudley Council happened on November 5th. PCPT architects, along with their third party providers, completed the work to the standard required by county planning officers. From submission until the end of 2009, PCPT, Kewford Steering Group and others worked to answer a number of questions put by the councils' planning officers. Changes to initial plans were made where required – e.g. amendments to access to the site, to cope with 'swept path', etc. The submission was backed up by considerable Steering Group effort to ensure the local community were kept fully informed, with a letter drop around the roads and houses in closest proximity. The changes required by the Council planning officers caused decision-making to be put back into early 2010. PCPT have been prominent in managing the process with the Councils and keeping the club project Steering Group fully informed.

Monday February 1st 2010

Dudley Council give APPROVAL of the plans submitted for the pitches only solution – the decision was reached in planning committee meeting, particularly in relation to the plans around access and surrounding road infrastructure and traffic. One key proviso – the erection of a suitable high fence along the boundary with the A449, as would be anticipated.

Friday, February 5th 2010

South Staffs Council give APPROVAL of the plans submitted for the pitches only solution. Some provisos include a revised siting of the internal access road, and other feasible and reasonable provisions for the club to uphold.

This final decision completed the picture in terms of planning approvals, and moves the project forward to the next big phase – finding potential contractors to do the work, obtaining quotations to complete, and seeking the necessary funding for the development.

March 1st to June 30th 2010

The following took place between the club gaining planning approval in early February and the end of June 2010 :-

- A detailed Agronomy Report commissioned and produced (via PSD Agronomy).
- A professional QS cost plan produced, giving budget costs for the whole scheme.
- Budget estimates from potential civil and landscaping contractors gathered.
- Two key meetings with the FA and Football Foundation – March 4th and June 8th
- Opened links with several potential funders and funding organisations.
- Acquired letters of approval, from excellent sources.
- Continued strong links between architects (PCPT), councils and club.
- Renewed the rental agreement on the ground - June 1st 2010 to May 31st 2011.

Given the stated position within the FA and Football Foundation (FF), that FA/FF funds for 2010 were committed to other regional capital projects in a more advanced state, the club was directed by the FA / FF to expect full, prioritised support for our project early in 2011. During the remainder of 2010, our project Steering Group efforts focus on the following :-

1. Define / refine scheme costs, alongside QS, PCPT, Councils and FA/FF
2. Liaise with partner funders, managing applications to be in sync with the FA.
3. Ensuring the project is ready for the FA application by early 2011.

