

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT – BPFMC AGM – APR 2024

(REPORT FOR OPERATING YEAR 2023)

INTRODUCTION

I would first like to remind you that the Barn and associated playing fields are owned by the Village, for use by the Villagers – all the work you see is carried out by unpaid volunteers, with no management support from SKDC or the Parish Council. We have to rely entirely on support from Village volunteers to ensure these facilities remain available for use by the Village, and we look to other Villagers to provide support and assistance if they expect the facility to be available to them in the future.

2023

As we entered 2023, my first full year as Chairman, having been vice-chairman for many years and a volunteer before that, I wanted to ensure that all the BPFMC governance procedures, processes and policy documents reflected fully current requirements and were “fit for purpose”. In late 2023, I had discovered that not all our Hirers had the necessary insurance provisions in place which could, in extremis, have placed unwanted liability onto BPFMC. We have reviewed and revised all our principal operating documents and policies and conducted a 100% review of Hirers insurance policies: including our own. Any commercial organisation or one defined as a “legal entity” must have its own Public Liability insurance as they are not included under the BPFMC insurance, which covers only BPFMC activities and private hirers.

BPFMC has also formalised the ownership of the Barn and playing fields with the Land Registry. There was no record on the Land Registry website to show the rightful ownership of the land; the only legal document we had was the 1966 Conveyance and Trust Deed. In order to safeguard and ratify the ownership of the property, solicitors were engaged and instructed to raise and submit a Land Registry application to formalise the ownership of the land for future generations. The invoice for this work was kindly paid for by Baston Events.

Early in the year, we conducted a detailed financial forecast review to identify areas of highest spend, most income and to determine where changes and savings could be made. Due to increased costs associated with higher gas and electricity charges introduced in 2023, we could no longer offer a preferential rate to Baston-based commercial activities, and we aligned their charges with the standard rate for all commercial Hirers. We have, however, managed to retain the preferential rate for Baston-based non-profit making or Community organisations; to support their continued use of the Barn; this includes the Parish Council and the WI.

In conjunction with the closer monitoring of costs and expenditure, we have controlled closely the use of gas, electricity and water – having discovered that the heater controls had been altered to have the heating operating when it was not required. However, in September we suffered a set-back, when it was discovered

that vandals had maliciously turned on the water tap for the cricket square and left it running for a period of 10 days. This incurred a cost of over £800, which we had not anticipated in our budgetary figures. Fortunately, we were able to claim back the sewerage element of these charges as it could be proven the water did not escape into the drainage system. Overall, the levels of vandalism experienced has not decreased and minor damage, littering and graffiti is still prevalent; which is a disappointment to us and should be to the parents of the culprits committing these crimes.

We also experienced a resurgence in the use of the tennis courts. Baston Events blocked booked two 2-hour periods each week, at a preferential rate, to encourage Village tennis players. Additionally, the Village Shop maintained a close control of hire fees for the courts and we gained considerably more income than collected in previous years.

Following the successful bids for funding in 2022 for the Adult exercise Equipment, BPFMC placed bids with the UK Social Prosperity Fund; that was administered within our region by SKDC. We were successful in gaining bids for 100% of the costs towards:

- Fitting new fire exits and a new front door to the Barn; which replaced the distorted and aged items that did not close properly nor keep out the wind. The new front door now sheds daylight into the entrance area.
- Replacement see-saw for the old and deteriorating item that was beyond economical repair and was in danger of becoming unsafe to use.
- Combined parent and toddler swing, to allow parents to swing with their young child, rather than simply push them on the toddler swings.

The 2 x toddler swings, fitted over 13 years ago, were also showing signs of wear and deterioration and Baston Events kindly provide £223 to replace the swing seats, with a more modern design, less susceptible to weather and UV degradation.

2024 – GOING FORWARD

Having improved our financial position from that experienced when we came out of COVID, we have been able to assign funds to the general maintenance of the site for 2024 and plan improvements to sustain the longevity of the facilities we have. Damaged or broken fence posts and rails are being repaired and the condition of the Barn roof and tiles, a potential cause for concern, will be surveyed to determine if remedial repairs are required. The boiler continues to absorb more funding than expected, with costly regular repairs in addition to annual servicing, so we are investigating the use of an alternative contractor.

We have had additional enquires for regular use of the Barn, which is encouraging and the Thurlby and Deeping football teams continue to use the pitches as they are in a far better condition than their own.

The ground maintenance contractor has agreed to freeze his annual costs to the same level as 2023, which should help us meet our 2024 budget figures without the need to raise our hire charges to private and commercial users. As a reminder, our annual operating costs; without any provision for repairs, is approximately £15k-£16k.

COMMITTEE

The Committee still seeks additional support from the Village. I will be standing down after the Annual General Meeting in April, so we will then require a vice-Chairman and we have been operating without a Secretary for many years; I role I have had to personally cover in addition to my role as Chairman.

Without the necessary Trustees and BPFMC Committee Executives, the long-term viability of Barn, Playing Fields, Children's play area and tennis courts cannot be assured; so I appeal again to the Village for support - it is your facility, owned by the Village for use by the Village, but it cannot function or be sustained without your support.

Martin Wynne

Chairman BPFMC

Apr 2024