

Warnford Playground application for a grant from the Warnford Parish Meeting of November 2022

This application is for a grant of £450 from the Warnford Parish Meeting on 3rd November 2022 for the year ending 31st March 2024.

Please find attached background information on the Playground, our most recent accounts and projected expenditure for 2023/24.

Warnford Playground, R. P. Chester Memorial Trust Co Ltd

The Charity was set up in 1974 to provide an area of play and open space for Warnford Village residents. It is located off Lippen Lane adjacent to the River Meon in an idyllic setting. The land was donated by the Chester family and is also a memorial to R.P.Chester, who was the first member of the family to live in the village, having purchased the Warnford Estate in the 1930s. He died in 1968. Since its inception, the Playground has been run by a group of unpaid trustees who have traditionally been residents of the village, although an exception has been made for Kate, the granddaughter of R.P.Chester himself; she hopes to move back to the village one day!

The current four trustees administer the charity and take on the responsibility for the upkeep of the Playground itself and the equipment that sits on the land. As well as being a registered charity, it is also a limited company.

Apart from Warnford villagers, the Playground is used by outside visitors, particularly in the summer months, when it is a favourite for family picnics. We believe that all would agree that the Playground is a great asset to our village.

Reasons for the Application

The Playground is a registered charity and has no regular income. It therefore relies on donations and goodwill to keep it running. We have limited, but very welcome, financial support from the Church via the village fete, held on the Playground, the Tom Coles Charity and the Christmas Market.

In the past, this small income has been 'topped up' with grants from the Parish Meeting and we ask that this continues. One of the major costs each year is the insurance (around £500) together with the upkeep and running of the machinery. Fuel costs have been somewhat higher this year as a result of the global economic situation and this seems unlikely to be reversed in the near future. Last year, we were able to avoid the cost of 'genuine' bark chippings for the play areas by using chipped wood from the tree felling operation. However, this was not of great quality and we will need the real thing this year, or early next. We also need to complete running repairs on the play equipment to adhere to the recommendations from the annual playground safety inspections and the cost of constructional timber has risen substantially.

Special Considerations

The issue of ash die-back disease continues to cause concern, following the removal of four affected trees last year. However, the remaining five trees do not appear to have deteriorated much this year, despite the very dry summer. Moreover, we have been lucky enough to receive an extremely generous donation comprising a sum large enough to perhaps cover the cost of removal of all remaining trees when this eventually becomes necessary. The money will be ring-fenced for this purpose exclusively and comes as a huge relief to the trustees.

Financial Outlook

With the profit from a very successful Jubilee Bonfire Party (about £500) and the extra £300 generously provided by the Village Hall Committee giving up their WPM grant this year, we have been able to fund a replacement park bench and picnic table as well as various other maintenance tasks, while keeping our heads above water. We have also been able to plant a number of replacement trees, thanks to a welcome donation from Rex Chester.

Next year, however, even without the ash die-back concerns, financial pressures will continue: bark chippings will cost £800 or more and the climbing frame timber is starting to deteriorate more rapidly as it ages.

The Parish Meeting's previous support has been vital in keeping the charity solvent and we therefore ask that serious consideration be given to this application. If granted, the money will largely cover the annual insurance premium, which this year was £490.

Thank you.

The Playground Trustees: Stephen Short, Robin Athawes, Phil Chadder and Kate Fismer