

Wem Sports and Social Association Floodlight Replacement Proposals

Introduction

The Floodlights on the football pitch at the Butler Sports Centre are in need of replacing and the Sports and Social Association is working to try and identify sources of funding to replace the lights.

Condition Report

A structural engineers report undertaken in 2013 gave the lights a life expectancy of 8 to 10 years. In 2016 following concerns about the continuing safety of the lights in high winds another inspection report was commissioned to supplement the first report. This inspection concluded that the facility should not be used in high winds due to the condition of the lights.

Due to this advice and the impossibility of identifying what constituted a high wind, the WSSA agreed to remove the lights at the end of the 2016-17 football season.

Replacement Lights

With the help of the FA a number of quotes were received to replace the lights which ranged between £37,000 and £50,000.

Originally the WSSA was hopeful that the new lights could be funded partially through a FA Stadium Improvement Grant match funded by fundraising contributions from the teams and a contribution from the WSSA draw fund. However it soon became clear that the only team that would be able to apply for this grant was Shawbury United FC who use the ground for home games. This was due to the fact that it is a condition of the league that when Shawbury play they must have floodlights, Wem Town do not require floodlights for the league they play in. However due to Shawbury United's plans to build their own facility in Shawbury their Stadium Improvement Grant allocation of £100,000 was already fully committed to the building of a new ground so they were not able to support an application at the Wem ground.

Despite attempting to find alternative sources of funding the WSSA have been unsuccessful as grants for replacement floodlights are non-existent.

Impact of removal

The removal of the lights will in effect downgrade the facilities on offer at the Butler Sports Centre. There is no other facility in the town of this size that has floodlights.

Shawbury United - The decision to remove the lights has meant that Shawbury United will no longer be able to use the ground for home games which will mean a loss of revenue of around £3500 per annum. This loss was accounted for in the 2017-18 budget set by the WSSA.

Wem Town (including Sunday team) – the loss of floodlights will affect training as in the winter months they have to travel to alternative venues for training. Due to the league they are in they are able to be more flexible with Saturday kick off times in the winter however the loss of the lights would mean that they would not be able to play any evening fixtures at home in the winter.

Wem Town Juniors – Currently between 60 and 80 children use the pitches weekly for training and matches. The junior team is expanding and they would like to be able to use the facility more for training in the evenings during the winter months as they have to hire somewhere else to train at the moment. They will not be able to do this unless the facility has floodlights.

Thomas Adams School – the school currently use the pitch on a monthly basis for first team games. This may mean the school will not be able to host after school football games in the winter unless the kick off is earlier.

Community Events – The ground is used for community events throughout the year. The most significant events are the Bonfire and Fireworks night and The Carnival. The floodlights are used at both these events.

Removal costs – Removal costs of the existing lights would be £2345, if new lights were to be put up at the same time this cost would be removed.

Alternative sources of Funding

WSSA – the WSSA draw fund has provisionally committed £10,000 to this project and there is scope to add an additional £5000 from reserves. Wem Town FC were originally asked to contribute £5000 towards this project to which they agreed in principal.

Shared Access – The WSSA has submitted an expression of interest to the shared access scheme which provides funds for floodlights in conjunction with mobile phone provision. There is no current indication whether there is any interest from companies looking to improve mobile phone mast provision in Wem. This option would also be dependent on planning permission being granted and involve legal fees.

Veolia – A stage one application was submitted to Veolia for funding, however this was rejected due to the limited amount of public access to the site.

Everybody Active Everyday – A grant application was submitted but was unsuccessful.

Other grants - A number of grant searches have been made that have not identified any other types of funding for floodlights. Sue Thomas has been helping with this and has not been able to put forward any suggestions. It is very difficult to find any funding for replacement of old infrastructure.

Preferred option

Allocation from the Town Council Bulmer Cottage Fund

The Bulmer Cottage Account is ring fenced for expenditure of the Swimming Pool and Butler Sports Centre which includes the playing field.

The WSSA would like the Town Council to consider allocating £20,000 from the Bulmer Cottage Fund to partially fund the new lights. It would be anticipated that the lights could then be funded as follows

WSSA Draw Fund Contribution	10000
WSSA Reserves	5000
Bulmer Cottage Fund	20000
Wem Town FC	2000
Total	37,000
Lowest quote received	36815

If the Council were to agree to the use of the fund for this project it would;

- Enable the lights to be replaced in the summer of 2017 with no impact on the existing provision.
- Ensure that the youth team would be able to use the pitch throughout the year and develop an already growing youth side further which can only be of benefit of the young people in the town.
- Increase rental income through increased use of the facility for training.
- Attract other clubs / organisations wishing to use the facility.