

Summary

A proposal has been put forward for the stopping of organised sport on the recreation field including ending 120 young people playing football weekly.

An adjoining landowner has made a proposal to the Parish Council to donate £4,000 per annum for three years to offset the expenses associated with maintaining the recreation ground, currently largely subsidised by the football club.

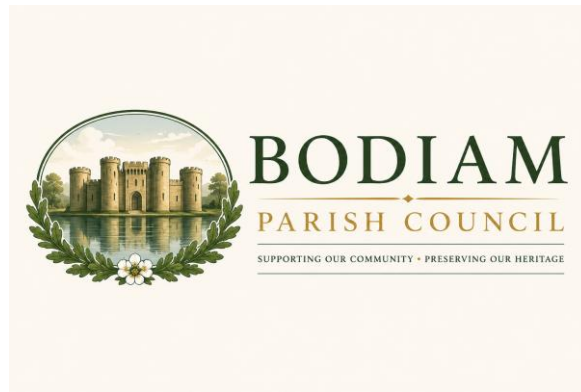
You may have received a letter from Newhouse Farm Ltd regarding a proposal from them to “sponsor” the recreation ground for a period of 3 years starting on 1st September 2026. We thought it important that the whole position be made clear to residents.

The recreation ground was purchased by Bodiam Parish Council in 1996 for use for sports and general recreation: in particular for the football and cricket teams then very active: Bodiam Football and Cricket Clubs and Ellerhoop Football Club. In the years after that a pavilion was built with much village and local generosity and fundraising effort for use by these sporting teams. It was constructed to the then relevant FA club specification with showers and a referee’s room. Over the years the field has been used for fluctuating numbers of sporting events depending on the strength of local football and cricket teams at any given time. The field is of course also available for Bodiam Primary School and Claremont sports days, Fun Day and other occasional events.

During the Covid epidemic, use for organised sport lapsed but we were approached a couple of years ago by Hawkhurst United Junior Football Club (HUUJFC) to use the field for various young people’s teams ranging in age from 5 to 18. Play took place in the same pattern as now in 2025 with only one complaint from a resident last summer: following this, the parish council offered to go and listen to the alleged noise disturbance, but this offer was not taken up.

We renewed the agreement with HUUJFC in 2026 on similar terms and playing hours. Their hire fees cover a substantial proportion of the costs of maintaining the field. Play started early April and although we did not initially receive any complaints (including at the Parish Assembly on 22 April), on the 25 April, we received a rental proposal from Mr Lovering (a neighbouring landowner) which has subsequently been revised to the current sponsorship proposal from Newhouse Farm Ltd. The proposal is to donate £4,000 per annum for three years to contribute to the costs of maintenance of the recreation ground provided all organised football and other sports ceases altogether with other restrictions.

Mr Lovering complains of noise, traffic congestion, loss of access to properties and anxiety about access for emergency vehicles. He complains about lack of access to the playing field for villagers. He also suggests that that this is somehow contrary to the terms of the Guinness donation of the village green land in 1937. None of the football or other activities take place on the village green so this is not relevant.



Immediately following these complaints, we took firm steps with HUFJFC including asking for marshals to ensure that traffic passes smoothly onto the field and is parked at the eastern end. No cars should or we believe are parked around the green or in the pub car park so any potential traffic restrictions should only occur as cars are arriving or departing the field, but we have asked HUFJFC to manage this carefully to avoid issues. We understand that the pub has not had any problems with parking or traffic. Thus, access to properties should hardly be affected and emergency services, not at all.

Parking and traffic congestion are of course regularly caused by the Castle although they do their best to manage this. We are also aware that Ark Academies Hastings are using the pub/castle entrance area as a drop-off point for their 'Duke of Edinburgh' students which is causing some disruption.

Access for residents to the field even when football is underway is not restricted except that obviously villagers are expected not to walk across the football pitches when in play, but there is plenty of other remaining open space. The recreation ground also continues to be available for other local community events including the Bodiam School Sports Day. The Fun Day is actually not being run this year.

Football is currently played five times a week as follows

Tuesdays	6 - 8	training	up to 4 teams
Wednesday	6 - 8	training	up to 4 teams
Thursday	6 - 8	training	up to 4 teams
Saturday	9 - 1	match and training	up to 4 teams
Sunday	9 - 1	matches	up to 4 teams

Outside these hours access to the recreation ground is unrestricted.

Whilst they have been unstructured, regular visits by parish councillors and other observers to the field during footballing sessions have not heard excessive noise: merely the burble of happy children and young people playing, comparable to the noise emanating from, for example, Bodiam CE Primary School.

Use of the field in the present format allows 120 young people to be involved in active healthy carefully supervised sport every week keeping them off their screens and out of trouble. It is estimated that 15 or so come from Bodiam and its immediate environs.

We asked for a meeting with Mr Lovering, but he was away at the relevant time.

The Parish Council would be happy to hear from you if you have a view either way as we consider the proposal which has been put forward.

Please email the Parish Clerk Lynsey Willard at clerk@bodiamparishcouncil.org.uk

Our next Parish Council meeting is on Monday 15th June at 6.30pm in the Parish Rooms.

Email: clerk@bodiamparishcouncil.org.uk