

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 'all-weather' 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 5<sup>th</sup>. 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> and June 8<sup>th</sup>
- 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 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to May 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

### **July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2010**

Within this period, the Steering Group sought clarification from the FA and Football Foundation on their stance with respect to the provision of changing facilities within the scheme.

During August, the club received official notification from the Football Foundation that a project scheme involving the development of 30 acres into football pitches would only succeed in the FF review IF it provided permanent building structures (changing rooms), and therefore the club would need to look at re-submitting plans to the Councils – Dudley and South Staffs – to now include those buildings.

The cost of re-design work and re-submission of plans to the Councils would, in all probability, need to be borne by the club in the first instance (which had already paid for previous architectural, design and engineering work, for a ‘pitches-first’ scheme). The club did not have the funds to do this at this time.

More importantly, the inclusion of such buildings would add to the overall development cost in the region of £200,000 – £250,000

The FA informed the club Steering Group via email, during September 2010, that the FA and Foundation were once again ‘working up considerable detail’ and assessing criteria, but with no indication that our project has gathered any momentum within the FA and Foundation.

The Steering Group made the uncomfortable but inevitable decision that it would no longer seek to apply for funds with the FA and Football Foundation, due to

1. Risk ( in terms of losing other funders’ interest, which was becoming more real as time continued to elapse, plus risk in terms of funds in general not being available from grant-making or other sources to accommodate the FA/FF mandatory facility requirements),
2. Uncertainty ( in terms of funds from the FA/FF, and timescales – both for submission of the application and then the 26 week review period),
3. Disparity between the club and FA/FF in what the scheme scope should be ( the club sees pitches first, to make the scheme feasible from a funding perspective; the FA see permanent buildings and fewer pitches on smaller plot – i.e. good for Adult football, but not in the interest of our *currently* predominantly junior club ).

The Steering Group, at a meeting in September 2010, resolved to do the following :-

1. Inform the FA and Football Foundation of its decision.
2. Create a tender document to go to contractors, before the end of 2010
3. Work with Councils to precisely define the scheme content according to regulations, and ensure we are compliant
4. Gather costs for the exact scheme, from the contractors approached, reducing overall costs where possible without compromising quality.
5. Work with known potential funders, with more do’able timescales, to hopefully obtain the funds required for the pitches-first scheme.

### **October 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2010**

The club corresponded with the FA early in October, and, after significant dialogue, in which the FA gave good attention to the issues indicated above, a meeting was held between club officials and the FA UK Facilities Manager and the FA Regional Facilities Manager on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The meeting resolved most if not all the issues put to the FA by the club. The club Steering Group decided to resume its negotiations for funds with the FA and Football Foundation, following assurances given at that meeting, with respect to prioritisation, a much more firm plan of action, and a resolution not to include unnecessary items in phase 1, such as the fixed buildings. The Steering Group, on behalf of the club, thanked the FA for their attention to this, and this gave the club greater confidence to carry on, with an agreed plan based on the following.

1. Construct a detailed 'Design and Build' tender document – Q4 2010
2. Issue the above to up to 5 contractors – end of Q4 2010
3. Obtain contractor costs – by end January 2011.
4. Create funding applications funders other than the FA – Feb/Mar 2011
5. Obtain decisions on main funding applications – by late Q2/early Q3 2011.
6. Submit application to FA / FF – end Q3 2011 / early Q4 2011
7. Obtain FA/FF decision – early 2012
8. Start build – by Q2 2012

The overall funding situation remained difficult at this time, and the Steering Group gave notice of this, to the Exec Committee.

### **January 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011**

During the period, activity progressed very much to the plan laid out above. Contractor costs were obtained following construction and issue of the requirements documentation, based on a 'Design & Build' contract tender. Five contractors were approached, and four submitted costs for the contract.

The first two main funding applications ( ex FA/FF ), for a total of £130,000, were enhanced (from the 2010 versions) and issued on March 21<sup>st</sup>. Decisions on these two applications would not be made known until June, July or August 2011.

The Executive Committee were given full updates throughout the tendering process, as well as updated on the overall status of the project, so that a decision could be made by the Executive in terms of going forward – e.g. likelihood of achieving the funds or achieving favourable result in terms of VAT.

Agreement was reached with the landowner over land option ( lease ) continuation beyond June 2011, to enable the club to make a decision for continuation after the club learned of the outcome of the funding applications in July / August 2011.

### **April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2011**

The funding application work continued and increased in intensity, with applications sent to a number of organisations and individuals in addition to the bigger funding bodies.

During this period, the club met with the FA and Football Foundation and received very positive news in that there was confirmation from the Regional Facilities Manager for the FA that our project was now definitely prioritised within the FA and FF schemes, in the ten projects earmarked. Whilst recognising that there is much work to do to complete the external funding to match against FA promised funding maxima, and work is required to complete the FA and FF specific requirements around FDP, Business Plan, Ancillary Facilities and other key points, the meeting outcome had to be viewed as extremely positive from a club perspective, and our thanks to the FA and FF at this stage for moving so much towards a successful outcome alongside the club.

Additionally, the club Steering Group received the first big success in terms of achieving external funding confirmation, in that one of the biggest Non-FA funders had accepted our application for £100,000 towards the project. At time of writing, the club is not announcing names of the funders, to protect possible privacy rights, and will do so when authorisation is provided by the funding body.

Further applications for large scale funds were submitted, with meetings attended on-site. In addition, Sport England representatives visited Steering Group members in Wall Heath, and again, positive messages were discussed around funding, with applications to be submitted for substantial funding help. Our thanks to Sport England also for their input and help. Key decisions on the big applications would come between July and October/November, at which point the bulk of the application work for the FA and FF would have been done. Therefore, at this stage, the Steering Group, as well as Executive Committee, had a sense of renewed enthusiasm and urgency around the project.

### **July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Further substantial progress was made during the period, in terms of funding successes as well as a very positive meeting with the FA and Football Foundation mid September. An additional £30,000 was granted towards the project by one of the major funders, along with £10,000 from another source, and cheques received for £5,000, £1,000, £300 and £100. In addition, the club raised over £1,600 towards the project through an event organised alongside the Alam Restaurant in Wall Heath.

The latter amounts helped to pay for additional architectural design work required, to dispense with Council requirements, and for planning approval for additional building facilities.

The meeting with the FA and Football Foundation confirmed that everything was leading towards a formal submission of the application to the Foundation by either December 1<sup>st</sup> or, at the very latest, by February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. The club aimed for the first of these two dates. There was recognition by the FA and Foundation that substantial progress had been made in terms of raising partnership funds towards the project. Work was required at this time, following the meeting, to reduce overall initial project costs, given the revelation that VAT has always been paid on pitches development, and that this added in a substantial extra element of cost which could not be matched by those funding sources visible to the club- hence the need to reduce on spec and re-cost.

The Club Steering Group took away actions in terms of pitches cost reductions and building facility cost reductions, to work in conjunction with PCPT and PSD Agronomy. Completion of the Business Plan and Football Development Plan became priorities, the latter to be developed and completed by the club's Executive Committee as a whole.

Further applications for funding were either in the pipeline, for an early October decision ( for £30,000 ) or being worked on (for £50,000 ).

Therefore, the final quarter of 2011 would almost certainly see a culmination of all the effort in terms of building the case and the application to the FA and Football Foundation, with the decision to come during early 2012.

### **October 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2011**

In October the club was lucky enough to be awarded a further £30,000 promised against the total capital cost for Phase 1, plus a cheque received for a further £2,000 which again eased club payments for vital Architectural work for planning submissions.

Whilst the original intention had been to submit an application to the FA and Foundation by December 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, it was clear that the body of work required to complete the two main stages of that application could not be completed by that date, and so an absolute final

deadline of February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 for submission of Stage 1 Supporting Documentation, and Stage 2 electronic application form, was agreed between the parties.

Legal work to finalise the lease agreement was sought and obtained, with Pinsent Masons kindly agreeing to represent the club yet again – a very generous offer of professional work, very gladly accepted by the Club's Project Steering Group and Executive Committee.

Further professional work was undertaken by our firm of quantity surveyors, Faithful & Gould, with the production of key documents following negotiations with the contractors – a revised tender cost presented as an addendum to the original, and a Procurement Strategy. A Maintenance Schedule was developed and presented by PSD Agronomy. PCPT architects submitted their applications for planning for the ancillary facilities, with final decisions to be made by South Staffs planning in January 2012.

A further application for £50,000, was submitted in early December, after getting great support and encouragement from both SASSOT and the Black Country Consortium. With this amount accepted by the FA and Foundation as part of the Club's matched funding, this brought the addition of projected total club funds and budgeted Football Foundation funds in excess of the now-revised total project cost including VAT.

Two further positive meetings were held between the Steering Group and the FA and Foundation during this period. With the 'technical' elements of the submission now accepted as being at the right levels of quality and detail, the focus from the early December meeting was put back onto the club's ability to sustain itself over the long term, within the Business Plan, with the 5 year Income & Expenditure plan being scrutinised – this to ensure that the club would be a 'going-concern'.

The final deadline for submission was given as February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, with a decision to be made by the FA and Football Foundation by June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. The final meeting between the club and FA and Foundation for the application development and submission would be January 24<sup>th</sup> 2012, by which time all parts of the application had to be satisfied and signed off by the FA and Foundation officials supporting the bid. The Steering Group needed to submit the Stage 2 application immediately after Stage 1 was reviewed and agreed at that meeting, and then copies of the Stage 1 Supporting documentation made and submitted to the Football Foundation in London before the deadline.

### **January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2012**

The Steering Group, FA and Football Foundation representatives met as planned on January 24<sup>th</sup> with the final Stage 1 Folder, which was subject to an initial review. The FA Regional Facilities Manager agreed that the Stage 1 folder was fit for purpose, and that this, together with the Stage 2 electronic application, could be submitted to London for formal review, with the final decision to be made either towards the end of May 2012 or early June. At that meeting, the FA and Football Foundation agreed to increase their possible share of the funding, so that the club would not need an additional private loan, which was very welcome news, and the Steering Group thanked the FA and Football Foundation for this generous offer. The Stage 2 electronic application was formally submitted on January 25<sup>th</sup>. The Stage 1 folder was copied, and two copies sent to the London offices of the Football Foundation before the Feb 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. As requested, two memory sticks containing all application documents were also provided to the FA .

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the club was informed it had been successful with the application for £50,000. This brought the addition of the club's offered partnership funding and potential/applied-for FA and Foundation funding to the funds required in total for Phase 1 development.

Preliminary discussion was held with the preferred Contractor, in preparation for the hoped-for result, so that, if the decision from the FA and Football Foundation was positive, the Contractor would be able to initiate construction work as soon as possible after the decision

was announced. Some questions were put to the club Steering Group in the period, towards the end of March, around legal agreement, liquid club funds, and project funding status.

### **April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 to June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012**

The period from the meeting in January between the FA, Football Foundation and Kewford project Steering Group, and the final decision-making FA and Football Foundation board meetings in late May 2012, saw further queries and enquiries made by the funding and grant making bodies, with the Steering Group filling in any gaps and providing answers and further material in support of the bid. Further pledges of funds came in from outside, as the Kewford total input to funding, excluding the much-hoped-for Football Foundation funding, continued to build, towards a club contribution excluding Football Foundation money of circa £300,000. This in itself was, and is, a significant amount for a club of this type to raise, in addition to the already spent, by then, £100,000 on ground rental alone. The Steering Group had put in a huge amount of work towards raising sufficient money to cover both leasehold costs and project contribution, together totalling around £400,000!.

On Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, the Project Leader for the Kewford Eagles Grass Roots project received official emailed notification ( at 23:10! ) from the Football Foundation that Kewford Eagles FC had been awarded a massive grant of £800,000, far greater than was ever anticipated. The following day, Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, members of the project team met with the FA and Football Foundation representatives at Birmingham County FA headquarters in Great Barr to be officially told in person that the huge amount of effort, put in over many years, involving many people from inside and outside the club, had reached a wonderful conclusion. With a total project cost of around £1.08M, for what is seen by the club as being Phase 1 of a long-term future development, this was, and is, a huge achievement – for the Steering Group, the Club, the Community, and indeed for football development within the Black Country for generations to come.

Having secured the funding, the club steering group were left in no doubt that a great deal of hard work remained. The projected build calendar, with O’Briens taking a lead contractor role, would take the following shape :-

Late August 2012	-	begin land forming and build activities on site
Early 2013	-	complete all main build / landforming prior to seeding
Spring 2013	-	seeding of tiered areas for pitches
September 2013	-	ready for 2013-2014 season assuming good growing period

The club thanked the FA, Football Foundation and all other major funders to the project, plus all other volunteer and professional contributors who had played a crucial part in reaching this vital stage, and looked forward to the next stages of the process.

## **2nd June 2012 – 30 September 2012**

Contracts issued for the work to commence and budget cashflow forecasts and funding drawdowns agreed with the various funders. O'Briens commenced the earthworks on the site on 29 August 2012 and the land started to be transformed. Signage was ordered showing this is a Kewford Eagles development with the Football Foundation logo. A pictorial diary was set up on the new Kewford web site so that everyone can see the progress being made. The 30 year Lease was also signed along with the various Charges. Quotes for an indemnity insurance policy for the Trustees were requested.

## **29 October 2012**

The ground profiling has progressed extremely well despite the weather and O'Brien's are hoping to finish the final plateau end of October/beginning November. The top soiling has been left in mounds and will be spread in March before seeding. The next phase is the accommodation block which will start in January along with the new access road and footpath extension and there will be a road closure for the drainage connection. There will be a lull in construction activity with O'Briens leaving the site and returning in January. O'Brien's don't want to start the building until January and it makes sense to programme the work activities together with the aim still being that all works are complete by end of May 2013.

The accommodation block is currently being tendered and will be negotiated with O'Brien following which we will issue an updated Development Budget.

## **22 March 2013**

Despite the snow and the continuing bad weather, the contractors have continued to work through and work has now commenced on the building block, i.e. the changing rooms, showers, toilets.

The top soil replacement has commenced in preparation for the seeding.

The new driveway from the road to the site has now been completed.

The permanent security fencing around the entrance to prevent unauthorised vehicular access has now been erected. This is a galvanised steel finish but could be painted green once all the work has been completed to blend in with greenery. The fencing on the corner by the roundabout (by the signage) will be chain link fencing and eventually down the A449 it will be ball stop fencing which is essentially the fabric mesh type to minimise visual impact. Any gaps in the hedges will be infilled with additional planting.

## **26 April 2013**

- The building is now watertight. Awaiting windows to be fitted. Building work will be finished by middle of May.
- Post goes up for ball stop fencing end of April. 3m – 4m in height. Netting will be installed 10 – 12 months time.
- PSD will start top soiling end of April and pitches will be finished and seeded mid May.

- Drainage put in at the top of the banks and soakaways and drains at bottom to help drainage on pitches.
- Kitchen area to be fitted out by end of May.
- Electrics completed. Heating in building will be calor gas. Water will be on mid-May.
- Hedge in-filling along A449 to take place in autumn.
- There is a maintenance schedule in place with O'Briens for pitches for 12 months.
- If good growing season pitches will ready September 2013 but league matches will not be played until September 2014. Goal posts will go in around 10 – 12 months time.

**Full Diary of Events and Photographs of Progress available to view on our web site  
[www.kewfordeagles.co.uk](http://www.kewfordeagles.co.uk)**