

## Summer on our playgrounds and playing fields

The warm weather has finally arrived and no doubt many of you are making the most of your outdoor recreation spaces, whether to play sport, watch others playing sport, have a picnic, go for a run, go for a walk, meet friends, spend time outdoors or enjoy the play area with your family. Our local recreation spaces offer so much for everyone.

At OPFA we are always impressed by the hard work that goes into ensuring that these are the best that they can be for the community. We know that for the most part this hard work is done by volunteers.

We know that these kind of improvement projects take a lot of time and energy. Don't forget that we are here to help, with free advice and moral support to help you achieve the best for your community. If you are visiting your local outdoor space more often during the summer months, and think of things that could be improved, do get in touch for help, we would love to hear from you.

**Our service is currently free, thanks to the generous support of South Northants District Council.**

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## How can we help you?

The OPFA advice service is wide ranging and varied. No question is too silly or too small! Just some of the practical ways that we can help you include:

- Site visits to give on the spot advice about playing fields or playgrounds, including facilities for toddlers and teenagers
- A regularly updated series of information sheets covering a wide range of topics (see page 6 for full list)
- Support and advice on new projects such as a new children's play area, pavilion or sports ground
- Advice on skate park and wheeled sports facilities
- Advice on teen facilities
- Guidance on standards and legislation affecting play and sporting facilities
- Local examples of other successful projects, with local people to contact
- Advice and information on a wide range of suppliers and manufacturers
- Regular networking and training events
- Identifying funding opportunities
- Advice on consultations
- Project management advice
- What to do if your local playing field is threatened with redevelopment
- Advice on managing a charitable playing field
- Maintenance and inspection information

Contact us for help and support on 01295 817662 or [oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com)

## Website for groundsmen and open space managers

Pitchcare is a useful website for those involved in looking after outdoor recreation spaces. It includes many useful articles, as well as month by month grounds care diaries including maintenance regimes.

[www.pitchcare.com](http://www.pitchcare.com)

## SALTEX 2019

SALTEX is an annual turf management event for grounds care volunteers, professionals and manufacturers. It will take place at the NEC in Birmingham on 30-31 October 2019. Registration to attend is open on the SALTEX website. Attendance is free.

[www.iogsaltex.com](http://www.iogsaltex.com)

## CASC Scheme Podcast

A recent edition of the Sport and Recreation Alliance podcast was dedicated to discussing the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme. This scheme enables community sports clubs to register with HMRC to benefit from a range of tax and giving benefits. The podcast webpage also includes links to useful articles on CASCs. The podcast and associated articles should be of interest to all amateur sports clubs in our county.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/241221/1248788-episode-6-improve-your-club-finances-your-101-guide-to-the-community-amateur-sports-club-scheme>

# Community Asset Transfer

Google 'Community Asset Transfer' and you will come up with a multitude of articles and information, so how best to find your way through the maze and determine whether this is appropriate for your community? What is community asset transfer and how does it affect playing fields and play areas?



## What is a community asset?

A community asset is essentially either land or community buildings that are either owned or managed by organisations within the community. The list of assets is varied but does include sports facilities, such as playing fields.

Locality, the leading national network of community-led organisations believes that 'land and buildings are only community assets if they are capable of generating a profit that can be reinvested into activities that benefit the community'. Clearly this would include pavilions or playing fields that enjoy regular use by and therefore income from, sports teams.

## Community Asset Transfer

If you consider that your local facility may be under threat then it may be worth investigating the possibility of Community Asset Transfer. This is when the ownership or management of your playing field, or other community facility, moves from the local authority to a local community group. Local authorities are empowered to transfer the asset for less than market value.

There are various options to consider, but the most common is where the community group takes on the management or ownership on a long lease of at least 25 years, or a freehold. Taking on a long lease has the added benefit of enabling the community group to apply for grants or loans to improve the

facility. Most grant providers will only give funding to groups that can demonstrate security of tenure – particularly in the case of the larger funding that is often needed to develop grass roots sports facilities.

Asset transfer works best where it directly impacts the local community and where there is a specific need for the asset – rather than taking an asset and trying to find a use for it. The group looking to take on an asset should have its roots in the local community.

## Community Right to Bid

This can be used to 'pause' the sale of community assets that you care about, such as the local playing field. This then gives your community the time to put together a bid to buy it. If you are concerned that your local playing field could be at risk of being sold, you should nominate it to be part of the 'register of assets of community value'. If your asset is registered, you would be notified if it was put up for sale and then have up to 6 months to prepare your bid.

## Where do we go for help?

There are several organisations who are able to give you the help and guidance that you need. Your first port of call should be the Sport England Community Sport Asset Transfer Toolkit. This provides information, guidance, resources and case studies, as well as a step by step guide to the process that you should follow, including once the asset transfer is complete and you are running the facility. The tool kit is divided into the following sections:

Sport England have produced the toolkit in conjunction with Locality, who will also be able to give you advice and who have good resources available on their website.

<http://mycommunity.org.uk/?s=community+asset+transfer>

<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-and-planning/community-asset-transfer/>

## Funding update

The **Les Mills Fund for Children** offers grants of up to £1000 for registered charities and accountable non-profit organisations who are working to improve the education and physical and emotional well-being of children aged 0-16. The work of the charity or organization must fall into one or more of the following categories

- Living in poverty
- Physical and mental health problems
- Health and wellbeing
- Living with disability

The deadline for the next round is 18 November 2019.

<https://lesmillsfundforchildren.org.uk/apply/>

The **Thomas Cook Children's Charity Community Grant scheme** funds projects that provide a clear benefit for young people up to the age of 18. Registered charities, schools and other recognisable and accountable community causes can apply for projects that are related to improving children's lives. The grants committee meets on a monthly basis. Grants must be submitted online by the 1st of every month. The charity will not fund the purchase of land or buildings.

<https://thomascookchildrenscharity.com/community-grants/>

The **Office of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner** has three grant schemes open to community groups, charities and voluntary organisations. All applicants must be able to demonstrate how their project fits with the Police and Crime Plan. The **Making Northamptonshire Safer Fund** offers grants of between £3000, and £10,000 for initiatives that include intervening early and preventing crime

[www.northantspfcc.org.uk](http://www.northantspfcc.org.uk) or email [funding@northantspfcc.pnn.gov.uk](mailto:funding@northantspfcc.pnn.gov.uk), or telephone Sam Ward on 01604 888113

The **International Tree Foundation Community Tree Planting Programme** is open for applications until September 30th. Northamptonshire is one of the priority areas eligible in this round. Grants of up to £1000 are available for projects that will plant a minimum of 50 trees and which meet the grant criteria.

<https://internationaltreefoundation.org/ukctpp/>

### Sport England Top Tips for Funding Applications

OPFA recently attended a talk by Sport England on applying to their Community Asset Fund. These were the top tips for those applying. They are useful as they can be used for any funding application:

- Read the guidance
- Take your time
- Get help
- Ensure the need and impact for the project are clear
- Be open and honest
- Talk to Sport England

In this instance, Sport England suggested that help is available from Northamptonshire Sport. Don't forget that OPFA can also give guidance on funding applications,

The last point is important for any funder. By discussing your project up front with the funder you are applying to, you can be sure that your project is eligible and you are not wasting valuable time.

<https://www.sportengland.org/funding/community-asset-fund/>

The **HS2 Community and Environment Fund** is open for applications for projects that improve the quality of life and environment in communities affected by the construction of the HS2 rail line. Priority will be given to applications for projects in communities that are 1km away from the route, although the grant fund is open to communities further away. Grants of up to £37k are available. Match funding is not required although projects that do have match funding are likely to score higher. Groundwork are administering the grant and more detail can be found on their website.

<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/hs2funds>



## Fields in Trust Green Space Index



Fields in Trust, who work to preserve publicly accessible open spaces in perpetuity, have released their Green Space Index, available on their website. This is a detailed analysis of the provision of public open spaces across the country. This is the first time that green spaces have been analysed in this way and Fields in Trust intend to update it annually. This will provide good evidence not only of the vital importance that such spaces play in the health and well-being of our nation, but also enable a picture of how much green space is lost for good year on year. Fields in Trust say that there are 216k hectares of green space provision in Britain, which equates to 35.22 sqm per person. Their data includes the number of people not living within a 10 minute walk of a green space.

If you are in the process of applying for funding to improve the quality of your local outdoor spaces for sport and play, or to increase your provision, then you may find the information from the Green Space Index a useful tool to help to make your case.

It is interesting to note that of the 216k hectares of green space provision, only 12.3k (5.7%) hectares are legally protected. If you are interested in legally protecting your local outdoor space for generations to come and ensuring that it is never lost, then Fields in Trust will be able to help you. They enter into a legal deed of dedication with the landowner that protects the site in perpetuity.

<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/>

<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/green-space-index>

## Safety during play area builds

During the construction of a new play area, it is important to ensure that people do not have access until the equipment has been safety checked and is ready for use. All new playgrounds should have a post installation check done by an independent playground inspector, who is a member of the RPII (Register of Playground Inspectors International). Post installation checks usually cost in the region of £400 and the cost for this must be built into the budget for the new space.

Until this has taken place, the play area should be surrounded with security Heras fencing, and playground managers should check this regularly to ensure that it is still standing, is still safe and people have not forced entry, in particular if there are longer periods of time when installers are not on site. The photo depicts a site where people have gained access and the fencing is no longer secure.

Gaining access can prove very tempting when the play area appears finished, particularly if it has been closed for a long period during construction works. It is advisable to ask your installer to hang the swings as close as possible to the post installation check, to try

and discourage people from breaking in. It is also important to put up a notice stating that the site is dangerous as it is still under construction and the play equipment has not been safety checked.

Your playground installer should provide you with a copy of their Construction Phase plan, including their Health and Safety Plan for the build, risk assessments and an installation method statement, as well as a copy of their insurances





Helping communities make good space for sport and play

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Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association is a registered charity (no. 304398). We work across Oxfordshire and South Northants.

Our aim is to ensure that people of all ages, including people with disabilities, have access to good quality local outdoor sport and recreational facilities, including children's play.

The OPFA is the only non-commercial organisation in the county able to provide a comprehensive and impartial playing space advice service for local Oxfordshire and South Northants groups. If you are working on an outdoor recreation project in your community, we would love to hear from you.

**Phone: 01295 817662   Web: [www.opfa.org.uk](http://www.opfa.org.uk)   E-mail: [oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com)**

## Information sheets available

OPFA has many information sheets on different topics covering all aspects of outdoor recreation provision. We have recently produced a new one on Pitch Maintenance. The full list of information sheets is opposite.

Please contact OPFA if you would find any of them useful. We continue to produce information as the need arises, and also have access to a lot of information from our partner organisations.

- Terms of reference for a Parish Council Committee responsible for the management of land.
- Maintenance contractors
- Pitch Maintenance
- Accessible Play Areas
- Accidents
- Balls Walls
- BMX Info
- Playground Fencing and Gates
- Funding Opportunities
- Playground Inspections
- Managing Charitable Playing Fields
- Maintenance Contractors
- Playground Notices
- Planning and Providing for a Wheeled Sport Facility
- Problems with Dogs
- Project Plan – Play Area Development
- Project Plan – Skate Park Development
- Risk Management and Risk Assessments
- Playground Legislation, Standards and Guidelines