

Report on the King George V Field, Annual Parish Meeting, October 2021

For the benefit of any newcomers to the Village, the combined site occupied by the Ramsden Village Hall, the King George V Field, and the Play Area, was given in trust by the Ramsden Family in 1937 to the Village for the purposes of recreation. The Parish Council is its Sole Charitable Trustee with responsibility for its management.

The Field section has fulfilled this in various ways over the years and has on the whole been maintained with income from grazing rights. It is not funded by the Precept or Council Tax contributions and has its own bank account. The traditional method of deciding on who would rent and maintain the field has been the Candle-light, or Pin and Candle Auction. In recent years revenue from grazing has been limited to between £100 and £200, mainly due to little demand.

In late 2019 after the livestock had been moved, the PC decided to suspend the auction tradition for the time being and leave the Field fallow. This would give the grass time to recover as its quality for grazing was poor. This would also allow time for a re-think about the future.

Last year when residents were confined to the Village the Field became very popular with dog walkers. This has continued through 2021 and many more people have come to visit and appreciate its beauty as a wildlife haven.

The Parish Council has no intention of stopping the use of the field by dog walkers. There are approximately 70 dogs now in the village and many people really love the fact that they don't have to drive somewhere to exercise their dogs. But, and it is a big but, we must all look after our wonderful asset. Dog waste must be bagged and binned and dogs kept under control. It is our Field and up to us to have pride in it and if necessary confront anyone who is not looking after it. Unlike the open countryside we cannot use the "Stick and Flick" approach to dog waste. A bin is provided and volunteers currently empty this for the fortnightly collection at the Hall. Incidentally, the problem of dog owners not picking up is widespread across the village.

We are now waiting for the results of 2 land surveys of the Field, one of which has already been done. These have come about for 2 reasons. Firstly, you may know that Bolingbroke and Toynton produced pottery in mediaeval and post-mediaeval times and fragments have been found in many places around the village. It is possible that part of the Field may be a site of archaeological significance. Secondly, as you know, we have been gifted a large number of young hedging plants and trees by Ground Control and these will be arriving at the end of November. We were advised by Jan Allen, Historic Environment Officer for LCC that planting should not go ahead until an Earthwork survey and Geo-physical survey had been carried out. We should have the results of the surveys and a decision from Jan before the end of November and will be in letting you know what the planting plans are then.

But we have 2 main problems. How are we going to maintain the field which is really a small nature reserve, and how will this be paid for? We have received advice from Operation Wallacea and just this week from 2 more local experts. James Forrester from the Lincs Wildlife Trust and Roy Harris, an Environmental Consultant described the field as a little gem, already rich in bio-diversity but needing ongoing gentle care and maintenance. We need to resist the temptation to tidy it up! Much of this we hope can be done by volunteers but the management of the large central area and the upkeep of fencing both need paying for. It might be necessary to have grazing for part of the year because in order for the grassland area to become richer in plant life with wildflowers to attract more insects, and not just a muddy mess, the grass needs to be cut or eaten and removed. There are other possibilities which the PC is investigating at the moment, along with preparing a 3-year plan.

So, any ideas, volunteer help or donations will be very welcome and please get in touch with us through the usual ways. We still have the slips people sent in earlier this year for volunteering. Also, any ideas on how to improve dog waste management would be appreciated. We can't just blame the visitors!