



## **Sports & Social Activities Commentary (Up to 2000 words)**

Woodcote is very well blessed with Sports and Social Groups which provide opportunities for all ages. The 'Village Directory' published annually by the Parish Council lists 32 separate groups. Though not all these groups are exclusively for Woodcote residents and not all are based in Woodcote, the vast majority are very Woodcote orientated. There is a good range of activities including sport, dance and drama, photography, music, environmental, also, groups aimed specifically at young people and groups for retired people.

Some societies have been in existence for over 100 years (Cricket Club founded 1880), while others are very new (Under- 10s Football). A new weekly Lunch Club was started on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 in the Community Centre for the elderly, with catering and entertainment provided by Langtree School. Most societies are thriving with plenty of members. The Football and Cricket Clubs each have in excess of fifty members and the WADS also have close to that number. Both major sports clubs have teams in the top divisions of their respective leagues showing that playing standards are high.

We are well-blessed with facilities for activities. The facilities are improving and are likely to get even better in the next few years. The main facilities available are the Village Hall, The Green (Recreation Ground), the Community Centre, Langtree School, the Primary School and the Oratory School. Plans to modernise and refurbish the Village Hall are underway and the Committee awaits the outcome of its Lottery bid. **These plans have the support of the groups which use the Hall on a regular basis and an opportunity has been provided at the Village Hall Open Day for all villagers to view the plans.**

Langtree School gained Specialist Status in the Performing Arts in 2005 and the grants it received under this scheme has enabled the school to develop high-quality 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities for the Arts. Under the Specialist Schools scheme, the school has a community plan which commits it to making these facilities and the expertise of its staff available to local people.

Many people locally attend swimming classes and/or play golf at the Oratory School. The swimming pool is a first-class facility. However, there is some feeling locally that the Oratory facilities should be made more readily available to the local community.

The Community Centre is a valuable amenity where smaller groups such as the Conservation Group and the Woodcote Correspondent Committee meet. It also hosts

the weekly Saturday morning Coffee Shop which has become very much a feature of village life.

Facilities for organised sport are generally good and likely to improve in the future. Currently, the changing facilities at the Village Hall are only just about adequate, but enlargement, refurbishment and modernisation of these facilities are very much a part of the overall plans for the Hall. Similarly, the playing surfaces on the Green for football and cricket are currently more than adequate but the sports clubs and the Village Green Committee are committed to improving the pitches to ensure that they meet and exceed the standards required for playing at the highest levels locally.

Facilities for sports training are underdeveloped. The recent and long overdue complete refurbishment of the Sports Hall at Langtree School is a step in the right direction. The addition of indoor cricket nets will be welcomed by the Cricket Club and should help them in their aim to attract more young people to play the game.

Currently, there are no outdoor facilities usable in the winter months for evening training. The nearest such facilities are in Wallingford, Henley and Reading, all of which are heavily booked. The scheme to construct a floodlit Astroturf pitch on the Langtree School field is wholeheartedly supported by the football club. There is some evidence to support the view that young people in the village are in favour of the Astroturf pitch as another amenity which they can benefit from. **However, there are some misgivings within the village about the environmental impact of this project.**

Facilities for the youth of the village is an area of concern. The results of the questionnaire show that over 50% of young people engage in social and sporting activities outside the village and yet only a small percentage choose to use the Youth Club. This would seem to indicate that the sort of activities which attract our young people are not sufficiently catered for inside the village. However, this issue is not clear-cut because few suggestions were forthcoming about what activities young people might like to see provided for them.

The lack of a permanent Youth Worker may well have had a negative impact on Youth Club membership and attendance because the results of the Youth Questionnaire reveal the vast majority want a full-time Youth Worker and would like to have a say in the running of the Youth Club. It is clear that further investigation into the needs of our teenage population is highly desirable.

Community Education also needs further investigation. In recent years Government policy has driven people away from Adult Education, and Evening Classes at Langtree had almost ceased to exist. Now Langtree has its Specialist Status, it is very well-placed indeed and very keen to provide classes. It also has 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities to offer, particularly in the Arts and Sport, but also in IT. And yet, recent initiatives to offer recreational classes have been poorly supported. This is clearly another area which needs more in-depth investigation.

The Recreation Ground/Village Green is a wonderful amenity and gives the village its distinctive character. For visitors, it is the village's most attractive and memorable

feature. The new children's playground with its state of the art equipment is hugely popular and very well used. The recently re-formed Village Green Committee is successfully redressing the neglect of recent years.

Many local villages are regrettably no longer able to sustain an annual whole village event. In Woodcote we can celebrate the fact that the Veteran Transport Rally is in its 45<sup>th</sup> year and continues to grow year by year, drawing visitors from all over the country. In 2007 a world record was set at the rally with 18 Burrell Gold Medal tractors in attendance coming from as far afield as Aberdeen and Holland. Not only that, but year by year village societies benefit financially from the rally thanks to donations from the Woodcote Charitable Association, the parent body of the Rally.

## SPORTS & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES COMMENTARY

Woodcote is very well blessed with Sports and Social Groups which provide opportunities for all ages and for many interest groups. Altogether 32 clubs and societies are listed in the Village Directory. Some societies have been in existence for over 100 years (Cricket Club founded 1880), while others are very new (Under- 10s Football).

A new weekly Lunch Club was started on October 1<sup>st</sup> in the Community Centre for the elderly, with catering provided by Langtree School.

There is some ambivalence amongst young people about provision for them. Only a small percentage attend the Youth Club, but the vast majority want a full-time Youth Worker and to be involved in the running of the Youth Centre. Only a small percentage of young people have made clear-cut suggestions for Activities/facilities they would like to see offered, yet over 50% of young people engage in social and/or sporting activities outside the village. Clearly, this is an area for further investigation.

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Plans to modernise and enlarge the Village Hall have received widespread support from the groups which use it. **All regular users have been fully consulted about their needs as part of the planning process and an opportunity has been provided, at the Village Hall Open Day, for all villagers to view the plans.** For some groups the refurbishment is essential to meet their present and future needs. This is particularly true of the Football and Cricket Clubs who now play in the top divisions in their respective leagues, where expectations of facilities are much more prescriptive.

The Recreation Ground/Village Green is a wonderful amenity and gives the village its distinctive character. For visitors, it is the village's most attractive and memorable feature. The new children's playground with its state of the art equipment is hugely popular and very well used. The recently re-formed Village Green Committee is successfully redressing the neglect of recent years. The Sports Clubs need the pitches to be maintained to a higher specification in keeping with their status and to bring them into line with similar villages.

The Sports Clubs, along with WADS, have the highest membership of societies in the village. Currently there are no outdoor training facilities usable in the winter months. The nearest such facilities are in Wallingford or Reading and these are heavily booked. **The proposed floodlit Astroturf Pitch at Langtree would be welcomed by the school and Sports Clubs and would provide another facility for the youth of the**

village. However, there are some misgivings within the village about the environmental impact of this project.

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PARISH PLAN

SPORTS & SOCIAL WORKING GROUP

AIMS & ACTIONS

AIMS	PROPOSED ACTIONS	PROPOSED BY	AGENT	PARTNERS	TIME SCALE	COST	PRIORITY
1. Increase membership of the Youth Club	Carry out a comprehensive survey of teenage interests	Village Plan Group	New Youth Worker	Youth Committee, Langtree School	Spring 2008	Low	High
2. Improve social facilities in the village	Consultation on enlargement and modernisation Village Hall facilities	Village Hall Committee	Village Hall Committee	Lottery Parish Council	2008-9	High	High
3. Improve facilities for sport in the village	Consultation on the provision of a floodlit Astroturf pitch at Langtree	Langtree School	Langtree	Football Foundation County Council Area Sports Clubs Primary Schools	2008-9	High	High
	Modernise changing facilities and provide social area for sports clubs at the Village Hall	Village Hall Committee	Village Hall Committee	Lottery Sports Clubs Parish Council	2008-09	High	High
	Improve sports pitches on the Green	Village Green Committee	Village Green Committee	Parish Council	2007-09	Medium	Medium
	Modernise and refurbish Langtree Sports Hall	Langtree School	Langtree	County Council	2007	High	Completed