

Inspired Facilities

Places People Play



Middleton Cheney Cricket Club

CASE STUDY THEMES

- Cricket
- Increased capacity
- Member retention

PROJECT SUMMARY

Summary

Project to construct 2 cricket nets to provide improved practice facilities at the club.

Facility name	Middleton Cheney Cricket Club
Lead organisation	Middleton Cheney Cricket Club
Organisation type	Community Amateur Sports Club
Location	Middleton Cheney, Oxfordshire
Sport	Cricket
Total project cost	£36,756
Inspired Facilities funding	£36,756 (100% of total)
Other funding sources	n/a
Tender process	Competitive tender (3 quotes for each of 2 contracts)
Contract type	No formal contract
Start and end date	January - March 2012
Duration of capital works	1 week

Achieved outcomes

- Retention of existing members and expansion
- Increasing standards
- Improved sustainability



Introduction

Middleton Cheney Cricket Club has been established for over 150 years. The cricket club is situated on the Middleton Cheney village playing fields, and shares the facilities with the village football club, tennis club, and social club. The cricket club has over 80 members and runs seven cricket teams during the season from May to September. They have children's teams in the under 11s, under 13s, under 15s and under 17s categories, a midweek men's team and two men's teams on a Saturday. These teams all play in local leagues. The facility is also used by another local team on Sundays.

The main driver for the funding application was the inadequate training facilities at the club. Prior to the funding bid being submitted, the cricket club had limited practice facilities. They used a 'flicx' pitch and portable cricket net previously, however, the pitch became dangerous, with the ball rearing up in random directions. Furthermore this equipment required the use of the cricket pitch, which meant that practice sessions had to be accommodated around matches and it became increasingly difficult to schedule training for the six teams. The men's first team had been promoted to the top division and would need to increase practice to maintain this level of cricket. In addition Middleton Cheney Cricket Club wanted to improve the sustainability of their club by retaining their younger players. A number of local cricket clubs had proper facilities in place, and there had been a trend for cricketers aged 15-17 to move elsewhere to play somewhere with better facilities.

The Project

This project involved the construction of two cricket nets, two permanent artificial pitches and external security fencing. The funding came exclusively from Inspired Facilities, though a small oversight left a shortfall of £1,500 which was funded by the cricket club itself.

The cricket club sourced their own contractors for the project. who were able to meet the project timescale.

Alternative funding had been explored but with no success, therefore without the support of Inspired Facilities they would not have been able to improve their facilities. They had also looked at mortgages or loans as a possible solution, but this type of arrangement was considered to pose a huge risk to the club's future and was not a gamble the club were prepared to take.



"I don't know where we'd have been without the fund, there was no way we could have funded it ourselves. We'd have lost a fair few players to other clubs. But because of the improved facilities we've been able to hold onto those players and we'll hold on to others in future." (Project Manager)

Outcomes

The Facility

Both the project manager and those who use the nets feel that training facilities have benefitted the club enormously. In particular, it has enabled them to arrange practice sessions at the same time as matches. For the first time this had enabled different teams to schedule regular practice sessions and make greater use of the time available. Due to increased capacity, demand has increased which has enabled them to establish an under-11s cricket team, and next season they plan to introduce a third men’s team to play on Saturdays.

Sports Participation

Participation is steadily growing and the facilities are increasingly used both in and out of season. The targeted throughput of 1,000 visits was surpassed in the first year, and the target for the second year, 1,200 visits, has almost been reached. A number of players and coaches described their increased involvement outside of match days. In addition the poor weather in 2012 led to a number of matches being called off, having nets ensured players were able to continue to play safely and the demand for the facilities greatly increased.

“Before this was built we rarely had any training. But now we can come in two or three times a week if we want.” (User)

“It’s definitely changed my involvement, before I’d practice once a month, now I come down twice a week.” (User)

In addition there had been subsequent improvements in the standard of play – the club had been in two cup finals in the last two years. A number of players and coaches thought the standard of cricket had improved throughout:

“I couldn’t bowl for the life of me before, but last season I took a few wickets. You enjoy it more because you feel more part of it and you improve and play better.” (User)

“The first team have been promoted and stayed there for two seasons, we’ve got to the final for the last two seasons, where we hadn’t before. So the nets have definitely helped.” (User)

THROUGHPUT	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Target	n/a	1,000	1,200	1,350	1,425	1,500
Actual	0	-	-	-	-	-

Lead Organisation

The members consulted were optimistic about the future, and were looking forward to the next season. From an organisational perspective the project had made them reflect on their development and has helped to make them more professional.

“We were perhaps a little ramshackle, we want to be a little more professional but still keep it fun. We’re here to play cricket after all.” (User)

In future the club felt that they would be in a position to budget more accurately and be more confident to discuss the required timeframe for completion with contractors.

Local Community

Support for cricket teams has improved with the increase in quality, and more members of the community are coming to watch.

There was also a wider impact creating diversionary activities for young people, a number of beneficiaries described how the nets were a good engagement tool for children and young people with little else to do. The facilities were able to be opened to young people even when there where no training sessions scheduled as long as there was adequate supervision. One young person described how it had kept them out of trouble.

“It keeps you busy, when you get bored you do stuff that annoys other people. It keeps you out of trouble.”
(User)

“I don’t get bored now, I just come down with a few lads and have a couple of hours of fun in the sun and get some practice in.” (User)

Key Findings

A key feature of this project is that the nets will help to provide a sustainable future for the cricket club in bringing in new players, retaining current players, and improving the quality of their cricket. The improved facilities have enabled the club to expand and introduce a new under-11 team, as well as a third weekend men’s team in 2014.

In addition there is the realisation that permanent nets enable the club’s members to play cricket safely when games are called off due to poor weather.

The funding application process was straightforward; the only difficulties were in the restricted timeframes allocated to complete the project. This led to a rush to acquire quotes, confirm work schedules and complete the project. In addition, in the rush to acquire quotes, the club made a slight miscalculation, and meant there was a shortfall in the agreed budget. Fortunately the cricket club was able to provide £1,500 from its own funds to cover this discrepancy.

The club reported that they would still source their own contractors for any future work, enabling them to maximise any potential developments by keeping the price down and potentially use locally-based contractors with a good reputation.