

**Trustees Annual Report -Ben Wragge Charity
Registered no 1187299.**

Charity activities are summarised in the Chairmans AGM report detailed below. Accounts for the period 31st March 2024 are appended to this Trustees Annual Report.

Chairmans Report.

2024 AGM. Ben Wragge Charity. reg. in England No 1187299

Location-New Green Community Centre-IP31 3TG

22nd October 2024 @ 7.30pm.

This has been a challenging and disappointing year for the Charity.

Despite significant effort we have been unable to gain support from the wider community to progress the 33-acre project and subsequently we have been unable to accept the offer of the gift of land. A detailed explanation and press release follows and this has been publicised in the local press and social media.

33Acre Project-The Full Story

After the Free Press announced that we had reluctantly shelved the 33-acre project we spoke on BBC radio Suffolk and residents have rightly been asking why this project cannot be delivered for the community-so here is the full story.

We had been trying since Bens death in 2016 to build a skatepark in his memory. Land is at a premium in Thurston and we had been unable to find a site. Having a site with planning permission is key to obtaining grants to add to our fundraising efforts. We formed a registered Charity to help our quest.

We approached a local landowner in 2022 asking for a small site for a skatepark. We spoke about the growing village which will double in size from 3000 residents in 2016 to more than 6000 with current housing developments.

We knew that formal reviews by the Parish and District Councils had identified a significant lack of Open Space and play facilities for older children even before the village expanded. We understood that Thurston Football club wanted more pitches in the village to facilitate the further growth of their expanding club. They had been looking for land and anticipated support from the FA .

The landowner used to play village football many years ago and after meeting the Football Club made the generous offer of a gift of a 33-acre site immediately adjacent to the Parish Boundary.

To put this in context a full-size pitch covers about one and a half acres so this huge area offered the opportunity to accommodate football pitches, open space, allotments, a MUGA, a play area for older children and just about anything the community might want for generations to come.

The offer was made to the Charity on the basis that we had to liaise with stakeholders and develop a funding plan to deliver it. The Charity felt it could not walk away from this opportunity and had to take this on and try to deliver it for the Community.

Current housing developments in Thurston all follow a pattern of incorporating small play areas for young children and we saw no plans to provide anything of scale. Mid Suffolk District Council have no published plans to invest in recreation

facilities in the village and continue to approve developments on an ad hoc basis with no overall plan for the village or engagement with the Parish Council.

We naively thought that this offer would be embraced by the whole community and that Councils and community organisations would overwhelm us with offers to get involved and help-that did not happen.

Between June 2022 when the offer was made and September 2023 the Charity in an effort to gain support, attended 103 meetings, exchange 170 emails, texts or phone calls, organised two public consultations and a round table meeting with stakeholders chaired by MP Jo Churchill. Met with, Thurston Parish Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, West Suffolk District Council, Great Barton Parish Council, Suffolk Wildlife, Suffolk Highways, Mid Suffolk Biodiversity officer, Thurston Scouts, West Suffolk Wheelers, Community Action Suffolk, Thurston Community College, Suffolk FA, Thurston Football Club, Planning Consultants, Quantity Surveyor, Men's Sheds, Gravity Skateparks, Skateboarding UK, Green party and Conservative councillors.

We organised a topographical site survey and survey of services, funded a preplanning meeting with West Suffolk District Council (who made favourable comments about the use of the site), developed a 3D vision for the site to demonstrate what could be achieved and published this on You Tube

Personally spoke to 34 of the residents adjacent to the site.

The Parish Council were supportive of the outline proposal and we set up a working Group with them. We also progressed a working group with village Skateboarders who

together with the Charity have been fundraising. We have liaised with the Press and spoke on BBC radio Suffolk.

Funding discussions-a key source could be CIL funds (Community Infrastructure Levy) These are payments made by developers to Mid Suffolk District Council for every house built in the village. The funds are to be used to provide infrastructure to support the housing being developed. The rate is currently £115 per square meter for each new house built, 5% of this is retained by the District Council for admin and 25% of the remainder is paid to the Parish if they have a neighbourhood plan in place at the time an application is made, the balance is retained by Mid Suffolk.

Whilst the site is outside the district and parish boundary we did establish that these Authorities could make grants of CIL funds if it provided infrastructure that met community needs. We have not made formal applications for CIL funds but in discussions were told by Mid Suffolk that grants would be limited to £100k as this was a community led project and could not be granted speculatively. This means we would have to have planning permission and a fully developed funding plan in place. The Parish Council also advised they could not fund speculatively.

The Charity has always made it clear that it has no ambition to own or manage the site. The landowner has been open about how the project might progress with stakeholder or public ownership, the only condition was delivery of recreation for the community.

In September 2023 the Football Club withdrew from discussions, we understand they had been unsuccessful in gaining the support of the FA. We felt they were key to the

project. As a small local charity, the scheme is beyond our resources. We feel we have done all we can to deliver this and with no help forthcoming we could see no way forward. and have advised the landowner we could not progress the gift.

The Parish Council have no land but do have ambitions to build a wheeled sports facility and play area for older children. These aspirations are in their Parish infrastructure Investment plan and we hope that they may obtain a suitable site. The Charity would donate it's funds to support this project.

We had hoped that by presenting the possibilities of this site to the community and those with the resources to take it forward the opportunity could be progressed. In that we have failed and we must leave it the councillors, politicians, and planners to deliver what they deem the community needs.

Ben Wragge Charity September 2024

There has been no fundraising since the previous AGM and our financial position is unchanged. Accounts are appended to this report.

This is a major setback for the Charity and we are faced with finding another site unless the Parish Council is able to deliver on their aspirations to progress a site/skatepark in the village.

I wish to record my thanks to Trustees and other supporters for their work and support in our efforts to progress this project. My hope is that we may yet find a way forward.

**Signed Roger Smith-Chairman
Ben Wragge Charity. 22/10/2024**

Accounts for financial year ending 31st March 2024 are unchanged from previous year.

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2024

Balance at 31 st March 2023	27,644.26
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Represented by

Bank	26806.91
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Debtor	837.35
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Total Assets	27,644.26
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