

A new report reveals how playing fields can save the nation millions

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Fields of Dreams – A new report reveals how playing fields can save the nation millions

A report commissioned by The London Playing Fields Foundation shows how playing fields make a major contribution to cost savings to local and central government. The *Fields of Dreams* impact report demonstrates the social, health and educational impact and cost savings attributed to the clubs and organisations based at just one of its playing fields in Walthamstow, north east London. It was calculated that the organisations using the charity's facility delivered an annual minimum cost saving to the public purse of £4,805,928.

At a time when there is increasing pressure to build new homes on urban and rural green space it has been very difficult to resist the loss of playing fields. Over the past 25 years the number of grass cricket wickets in London has fallen by 41% and grass football pitches by 20%. Until now it has been difficult to prove their wider community value.

The *Fields of Dreams* impact report, the first of its kind commissioned by a playing fields provider, demonstrates how the London Playing Fields Foundation's approach to using sports development principles to underpin the management of its grounds can deliver wider tangible social, health and educational outcomes. It makes a compelling case for the protection and full use of playing field sites based on the contribution they make to improving the lives of the people who play there.

The research focuses on 16-25 year old users of the Douglas Eyre Sports Centre in Walthamstow and considers the playing field's positive impacts upon community safety, physical health and wellbeing, educational attainment and economic regeneration. It shows that savings of nearly £5million could be achieved through proactively engaging with the local community and providing a venue through a combination of innovative management and effective partnerships with like minded organisations. Half of the social cost savings were delivered by five projects that had a specific commitment to driving social development through sport, including LPFF's own London Communities Football League and Coping Through Football – a project focusing on young adults with mental health issues. Above all, the report argues that playing fields are far more than just parcels of open space and they provide a venue where a lifelong love of sport is engendered, friendships are formed and for the gifted few where careers begin.

Kate Hoey MP, LPFF President said: "The savings that well managed playing fields can make to the public purse are stunning and this report should make any school or local authority considering selling off their fields to think again."

ENDS

Notes to Editor

Fields of Dreams report

The Fields of Dreams report is being launched by London Playing Fields Foundation on Wednesday 18th November amongst MP's whose constituents include its grounds, namely, Ruth Cadbury MP, Stella Creasy MP, Clive Efford MP, Stephen Hammond MP, Steve Pound MP and Wes Streeting MP.

The impact report was written by research company Substance and is based on usage data between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015.

The assessment of the wider social impact is based on the use of the Sportworks model developed by Substance for the Sported Foundation which is now being used by several hundred sport for development projects in the UK including a number of professional football clubs. The analysis was limited to activities that engaged young people up to the age of 25.

The full report which includes an executive summary is attached. Hard copies can be requested from

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Katherine Hegarty (see contact details below).

The London Playing Fields Foundation was formed in 1890 and is the largest charity (registered number 302925) in London for the protection, provision and promotion of playing fields.

The Foundation currently owns and manages eight large playing fields (totalling over 200 acres) spread across the capital. Its mission is not only to save threatened sites but also to help playing fields enrich the lives of the 11 million people who work, visit and live in London.

It focuses on young people and disadvantaged groups, using sport as a means of improving their social skills, health and wellbeing, education and employment aspirations. Through targeted use of its grounds, it aims to widen, increase, sustain and extend participation in sport and physical activity.

Douglas Eyre Sports Centre, Walthamstow, E17 7HE

- The 33 acre playing field was acquired by LPFF in 1909 and is one of two sites that the charity owns in LB Waltham Forest.
- The ground hosts twenty one adult and four junior football clubs and four cricket clubs.
- During the research period a total of 38,843 people used the facility.
- The ground is a key venue for London FA coaching courses with over 600 coaches passing through its doors annually.
- Since 2012 the ground has attracted £700,000 of capital investment into the borough.
- The playing field receives no funding from central or local government

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Fields of Dreams report

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