

Goudhurst Parish Council

The Glebe Fields and the Childrens' Play Area in Back Lane

The Glebe Fields and the Play Area are owned by the Diocese of Canterbury. For 6 years now your Parish Council has been negotiating with the Diocese to take a 30 year lease on these properties.

Why are we doing this? The owners (the Diocese) have, over several years, failed to carry out regular basic maintenance on the fields, and little to none on the play area equipment. The grass has not been cut, the lower Glebe is infested with weeds and much of the Play Area equipment has fallen into disrepair – dangerously so as many of you will know.

Over a month ago we came to an agreement with the Diocese on the terms of the lease. Your Parish Council has signed it but so far the Diocese has not. It means of course that the Parish Council does not yet have the legal right to go onto the Diocesan land to carry out maintenance and improvements. We should not be spending Council Tax money without the lease, but we have done some emergency work because we believe local residents want us to do it.

We had the top Glebe (the Village Green) grass cut in time for the fete earlier in June. The grass in the lower Glebe has also been cut so as to make parking available for those attending the Fete. We have introduced an extra gate in the lower Glebe out into Maypole Lane so that vehicles can enter and exit by different gates.

Taking a positive view, we expect the Diocese to sign the lease agreement eventually. Once that is done, the Parish Council plans:

1. To improve the quality of the grass on the top Glebe (the Village Green). We have appointed a grounds maintenance contractor and he will soon be starting work.
2. Properly gate the upper Glebe (Village Green) to improve security. Parking on the Village Green is not going to be allowed except for when functions are being held at St Mary's Church. We are considering increasing the number of letter bins.
3. We are taking advice from the Kent High Weald Project team on improving the quality of the lower Glebe land. We hope to considerably reduce the weeds and possibly introduce a wild flower meadow. We have we already received other ideas from local residents.
4. An upgrade to the children's Play Area. We have already had it professionally inspected. Much of the wood is rotten; the supporting posts for the swings especially so and we were advised to remove the swings which we have done. Regrettably, other equipment may also be condemned which means that, in line with our responsibilities as a Council and with our insurance, non-compliant equipment will have to be removed. Safety first.

The Parish Council aims to bring the Play Area up to modern standards. The cost is likely to be £20k and possibly a lot more. We are looking closely at our current 2018/19 budget and what provision we can make in the 2019/20 and 20/21 budgets. We are likely to have to do it in stages over a number of years. Initial thoughts are that we might launch a crowd funding campaign to support the Parish Council's budget spend so that equipment can be reintroduced in a shorter timeframe. More information on this will be available in due course.

In the meantime we welcome any comments or suggestions you may have. Please contact:

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