

Watchet Bowling Club Frequently Asked Questions

Watchet Bowling Club have a vision for a new building that will take the club into the 21st Century, with a new state of the art indoor bowls rink and community and leisure facilities including a gym and community space.

Story so far:

Planning permission awarded

Funding secured to pay for land where current garages are sited

The club is now in the process of carrying out community consultations to ensure that plans for the internal space reflect the desires of the wider community

Next steps:

Consultation results to feed into Business Planning process

In depth Business Planning process to ensure that costs can be met by income generated

Capital funding application process, to major grant funders

Build begins once funds awarded.

Why do we need a new building?

The current Bowling Club building is becoming increasingly unfit for purpose. Whilst it is beautifully cared for and much loved in its current state, it is badly in need of refurbishment and expansion to meet the needs of members and visiting teams. A new building has the potential to reinvigorate the club, increase membership and appeal more widely to the local community. A new building would help to 'future proof' the Bowling Club and provide much needed leisure facilities for the town.

The new building will have ladies changing facilities, disabled toilets, larger kitchen, double indoor rink, as well a new bar and community space.

What's the timeline?

We aim to open doors in 2019, however we are still at fairly early stages so this is not set in concrete and will likely shift.

Timeline phases include:

Public consultation - Underway

Business Planning – Completed September 2017

Capital build funding applications – Bids submitted October 2017 (dependant on what grants and when submissions open)

Funding in place – July 2018

Build starts – October 2018

Doors open – June 2019

Where will the funding come from?

There are a number of capital grant funders we will apply to get the money from. Currently we are particularly looking at the EDF Hinkley Point Community Impact Mitigation Fund as a hopeful source, but other funders could and will also likely be approached. These could include Sports England, Power to Change, National Lottery and a number of other potential sources that will need to be investigated.

How much will it cost and is it cost effective?

Current costings imply a build cost of £1million; however, a full cost analysis process will need to be undertaken in order to apply for funding.

Whilst this initial expenditure may seem like a large sum the running costs of a new building will be significantly lower due to the far greater energy efficiency of modern buildings. Ideas are already in place for energy saving schemes such as rainwater catchment, and solar panels which will also serve to lower costs. Plus, with the addition of new leisure facilities such as a new gym, there will be greater potential for revenue income to bring more money into the club.

What kinds of 'leisure facilities' might be included?

The new building has designs for a new gym plus community space that could be used for all sorts of things. Lots of ideas are coming up through the consultation including using the space as a functions venue, for perhaps weddings or dances. The space could also be used by outside providers to put on sports training courses such as gymnastics, Zumba, Tai Chi, fencing etc. Popular suggestions have also included darts facilities and tournaments, pool table, table tennis. Essentially all ideas are welcome at this stage, once we begin to business plan the development,

then we will tie down which activities will be most sustainable and viable for the project, and which ideas are the most wanted and needed.

Will the leisure facilities need staff?

Not necessarily. Again, it depends what types of activities take place, but if for example we go ahead with the idea for a gym, this doesn't necessarily mean that there has to be a staff member or someone on reception. Bookings can be made remotely very much in the way that for example the Community Centre works with the Town Council at the moment or the Phoenix Centre etc. However, we will be exploring all options when we work out the business model over the next few months.

Will there be enough membership to fill the space?

One of the reasons for building the project is to attract new members to the Bowling Club, and also to raise the profile within the town so that the community come to use and enjoy the facilities. We also want to attract people from further afield too. Marketing will be an important element of running the new building, however this can be done relatively simply but will serve to let people know about the wonderful new facilities available and bring people in. So yes, our aim is to grow the membership over the years following the opening of the new building.

Will our subscriptions go up?

We will work that out in the business planning stage, but to reassure you if they do go up it would only be by a small amount and we will do all we can to ensure that the membership fee stays at a level you are comfortable with.

Bowling Club members get free gym pass?

Ha! This question comes up a lot! We would love to offer all our Bowling Club members a free gym pass, but we're not at the stage to make promises yet. Naturally we have to make the figures stack up so we will figure this out as soon as we can, but keep this request in mind!

What will happen in the interim period?

We will plan for a phased build so that the club can remain open whilst building takes place. Obviously, there may be some restrictions, but we hope to work closely with you on how to best manage this.

Will we be competing with the Community Centre on the Memorial Ground?

It is important to us that we don't take away from what other organisations are doing within the town, so we would always look to provide a very different offer that doesn't compete, therefore we are seeing the new building as less of a community centre, and more of a leisure centre with a strong sports focus.

What are the costings?

We estimate that the building will cost £1m, however a full costings plan by a Quantity Surveyor has yet to be carried out, and will need to be done before we can apply for funding, but this is the ball park figure.

Will there be enough parking?

Yes, parking has of course been considered in the building designs

What about the Right of Way through the car park?

Now, there is a Right of Way that runs through the car park, we will be talking to Somerset County Council Rights of Way department about this and whether the path can be diverted, which we understand should be possible.

Will we have the ability to extend opportunities to other clubs?

This is an important part of the new project, developing good relationships with other clubs, and extending opportunities, so yes, this is very much an opportunity we would wish to develop.

Future name of club?

We have been having lots of discussion with members about this. The majority feeling is to expand the name to include the leisure facilities; something like 'Watchet Bowling and Leisure Club' but no decision has been made yet, so your ideas and thoughts are very welcome.