

RUSTLINGS LAWN TENNIS CLUB, SHEFFIELD ARTICLE FOR YORKSHIRE TENNIS

Going in to 2018 it was obvious to all that if we were to move Rustlings forward a good starting point would be the resurfacing of our five tarmac courts. They had lasted 14 years but were showing signs of breaking up, with a lot of debris and cracks plus poor drainage; altogether an inferior playing surface.

It was a joint Committee decision to put the work out to tender and we started this process in the summer, approaching three contractors who all visited the site, with some Committee members present. There was quite a bit of discussion whether to change the playing surface but it was felt this was out of our budget.

Quotations came in between £50,000 and £60,000 and we decided to use a Leicester-based company – Fosse Contracts, who are a SAPCA Member. They came highly recommended as confirmed by references from other tennis clubs they had worked for. We called our resurfacing project Stage One which costed out at £50,500 including resurfacing, work to edges, drainage work and painting. We allowed for an additional £12,000 within the work for floodlighting civils to be incorporated. Stage Two of our project was to be the installation of floodlights at a future point.

We were in the fortunate position of having almost £50,000 in the bank, amassed for such an eventuality, and with the encouragement of the LTA's Participation Development Partner, Paul Sheard, we applied to Yorkshire Tennis' Advantage Yorkshire scheme in January 2019. They were particularly enthusiastic and supportive of our plans. The application was comprehensive and relatively straightforward. Their checks on how financially sound we were and how we would raise any additional monies were extremely thorough.

We were delighted to receive a Grant of £4,000 from them, plus a £25,000 Loan repayable over 10 years so this put us in a strong position to 'firm' up on the exact details of the work but at the same time raise extra funds. This was done in the main by donations/pledges from members/ex-members, various membership packages, profits from our 100 Club and small fundraising efforts. Many letters sent to businesses in the locality yielded little, and a plan to sell a small plot of land proved too complex.

The work started end of July 2019 and (apart from theft of major machinery from the site) went smoothly and to time. It was frustrating for all of us to be off court for so long, waiting through the curing and paint drying processes but well worth the wait till mid-September. The interest from the local neighbourhood and general plaudits were amazing and without doubt the re-surfaced courts have transformed our playing experience. We have had such positive comments from members, visiting teams, coaches etc. The quality of the surface means we can now play during heavy showers as drainage is not a problem and has extended our playing hours.

However, the best outcome has been that this work has launched us into a position where we can start to compete with other tennis clubs in Sheffield. The new surface created such an impact that within a matter of weeks we had 16 new members join.!