

SOUTH KESTIVEN TABLE TENNIS CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

It has been the ambition of several members of the Grantham and District Table Tennis Association to have their own premises for some 25 years or more. In 1991 the Council made their dream come true when it offered to build an all purpose table tennis centre for the league at the Meres.

The Centre was officially opened by Johnny Leach, twice men's singles Champion of the World 1949 and 1951, on the 2nd January 1992.

LEASE AGREEMENT

To enable the league to have these premises a lease agreement had to be made between the Council and Trustees of the Grantham and District Table Tennis Association and the Grantham Badminton Association.

A lease agreement for the centre building was made between the Local Authority and three members of the Grantham and District Table Tennis Association and one from the Badminton Association. In addition the Trustees had to enter into another lease agreement with a Brewery to enable the centre to be licensed to sell liquor.

RUNNING OF THE CENTRE

The day to day running of the table tennis centre is the responsibility of Trustees and a Committee. A scale of charges for the hire of the facilities were set which have to be paid by any organisation or person who hire the centre.

To help with the running of the centre joint funding between the Sports Council and the Local Authority was agreed to pay for a Centre Manager. The manager would be in attendance during the day Monday to Friday, with evenings and weekends covered by volunteers.

A centre manager was appointed who took up his duties with some vigour and enthusiasm, unfortunately personal tragedy struck and he had to resign on ill health grounds.

The vacant position was not filled and the day to day running of the centre fell on the shoulders of Mr McDonald and his team of enthusiastic helpers. This team of people could only devote their time and energies to the centre on evenings and weekends and very occasionally during the normal working week. As a result of this the centre has never been fully developed and marketed and it is not possible to say how much more income could have been

generated if the centre had been used to its full capacity during the mornings and afternoons on week days

CENTRE ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

There are weekly block bookings by the Grantham and District Table Tennis Association, Woolwich Junior League, Gonerby Table Tennis Club, the Badminton Association and Grantham Athletics to use the centre.

The usage of the centre over a typical week is:

Monday evening	Athletics Table Tennis	Grantham and District League Matches. Mid September to late April - most weeks. Use three quarters of hall, one badminton court available for hire.
Tuesday evening	Table tennis	Woolwich Junior League. October to April. Use half of hall, two badminton courts available for hire.
Wednesday evening	Badminton	All four courts in use all night.
Thursday evening	Badminton	
Friday evening	Table tennis coaching	Used by Gonerby Table Tennis Club for Coaching.
Saturday	Table tennis	Coaching and weekend training camps.
Sunday	Table tennis	Coaching and weekend training camps.

The centre has been used for England international matches against China, (twice) France, Japan, Holland and Germany, some of these events have been televised by BBC Television cameras. In addition New Zealand used the centre as a training camp before the Barcelona Olympics of 1992. The English Table Tennis Association have hired the centre for weekend training camps on average four weekends per year.

South Kesteven Table Tennis club play in the National Women's league, this

league attracts some of the strongest women player in the Country and it would not be possible to play in such a league without the facilities provided at the centre. In addition to the league there is a European knockout tournament which the women's team takes part in and this has over the years brought teams from Belgium and Luxemburg and necessitated our team travelling to various European countries.

The table tennis season runs from early September to late April the following year, the length of the season has been extended in an attempt to maximise income for the centre. Each year the local championships take place over a weekend, usually in the month of March, which also helps to generate further income.

It would be hard to increase income to any great extent on current figures without being able to offer additional day time activities. There is a market at the right prices for use of the centre by local schools for table tennis and other sports during the mornings and afternoons on weekdays.

Since the centre opened the outgoing have not been matched by income and if it had not been for the Council's generosity in waiving the rent of £2,000 per month the Trustees would have had to terminate the lease and the centre either close or be run by others. Another substantial cost is the General Rates levied on the building and the Trustees with the help of the Council is pursuing Charitable Status, which if successful would mean that General Rates would not be levied.

CONCLUSION

At the moment the centre is manned mainly by volunteers and it is unrealistic to expect this same group of people being able to give this commitment indefinitely. From experience there is not a group of people in the background prepared to take over the running of the centre should any of the present volunteers have to reduce or end their commitment.

The centre has been a success with regard to bringing individuals together to participate in table tennis, badminton and athletics. However, if judged on a financially criteria only, it has been a failure. In mitigation several individuals have contributed a great deal of time and enthusiasm in an attempt to make the centre a success and if commitment was a measure of success then the centre is just that, a great success.

Therefore to put the centre on a firm Business footing a Centre Manager needs to be appointed with a commitment to maximising the use of the centre for all sports and other activities cost effectively.

A REALISTIC VIEW TO THE FUTURE

- 1) A manger should be appointed to run the centre. One of his prime objectives should be to increase usage of the centre throughout the mornings and afternoons on weekdays.
- 2) The manger should be transferred to the company who take over the running of the sports complex, which will include the table tennis centre, when complete.
- 3) The Council set core times when the centre would be available for table tennis, badminton, and athletics. The days and times would be for a 24 month period with a notice period of 12 months if the times were to change.
- 4) Charges for the core time to be set at the start of the term and not increased by more than the rate of inflation per annum.