

Overview of the Transfer of the North Field to the Athletic Club

The following overview has been put together after an extensive search for historical documents and after many hours spent reading through the meticulously kept documentation of obtaining the North Field. There is a plethora of paperwork detailing step by step all decisions and processes faced in purchasing the North Field, which are in the Clerk's office for perusal.

History

Neyland Town Council began their interest in purchasing the 'North Field' in 1975. The decision to purchase the land came about due to the implementation of a plethora of planning permissions being granted, for a development of approx. 600 Dwellings. Neyland Town Council wanted to secure and protect some land for sporting and recreational purposes.

The land was originally valued at £4,750. NTC approached the sporting organisations of Neyland and advised them of their wish to purchase land and that as the land was to be purchased for sporting and recreational use, and that the current sporting organisations were expanding drastically, NTC asked the sporting organisations for a grant towards the purchase of land in exchange for a long term lease on the land. The organisations agreed and proposed a grant of £3,500 (Athletics Club £1,000, Rugby Club £1,000, Football Club £1,000 and Cricket Club £500) However, the landowner at the time (Mr. W. Vaughan) refused the offer as he felt that £4,750 was not nearly adequate for the valuation of the land. This led to a lengthy process of obtaining the land via a Compulsory Purchase Order.

A Compulsory Purchase Order could only be obtained via a Local Authority body, so NTC approached Preseli District Council with a proposal that they could purchase the land via a CPO on behalf of NTC. After proposals presented by NTC, along with public consultation, Preseli District Council agreed to support NTC by way of applying to the Welsh Office for a CPO on behalf of NTC to acquire the North Field for recreational and sporting purposes. The Secretary of State granted the CPO on 18th September 1978 and subsequently, Mr. Vaughan was served with a 'Notice to Treat' on 18th December 1978.

Evidently, the CPO was a lengthy process, with numerous back and forth between the Solicitors acting on behalf of NTC, Preseli District Council and Mr. Vaughan, to ensure the land was correctly valued and that Mr. Vaughan was adequately compensated. As such, NTC and the Neyland Sporting Organisations asked for Mr. Vaughan to be served with a 'Notice of Early Entry' to the land to begin works. The notice was granted, however, this meant that from the date of entry, the amount payable for the land once the formal acquisition took place would be charged at an additional interest rate of 14% per day from the day of entry. NTC and the Clubs were fully committed to this. Notice of Entry was served on Mr. Vaughan on 6th March 1979, with entry to take effect within 14 days of the date of notice.

1980 saw much back and forth regarding updates on the CPO, application for grants from the Welsh Sporting Council (which were denied due to NTC not yet being the legal owners of the land) and attempts to receive correspondence from the District Valuer regarding the recommended valuation of the land.

NTC had received, on 6th April 1979, £5,500 from the Sporting Organisations (Rugby; £1,000, Football; £1,000, Athletics Club; £3,000, Cricket; £500).

On 1st December 1980, Preseli District Council and Neyland Town Council were provided with the District Valuer and Valuation Offices report, with the sum of valuation of land at £15,580 (including compensation). With the addition of the Survey Fess and interest incurred, the total sum to purchase the land was set at £20,370.72.

A special meeting of Neyland Town Council was held on 26th January 1981, with NTC asking the Sporting Clubs for additional monetary contributions. Further contributions from the Sporting Clubs were agreed on the basis of a guarantee of a long term lease. Contributions came as follows; Athletics Club; £2,500, Rugby; £1,000, Football; £1,000, Cricket; £500.

In total, the following contributions towards the purchase of the field, and based on the provision of a long term lease, were as follows:

Athletics Club	£5,500
Rugby	£2,000
Football	£2,000
Cricket	£1,000
Total	£10,500

NTC's contributions were based on a Temporary Loan received from Preseli District Council of £7,800 (granted on 5th April 1979) plus accumulated interest bringing this total to £9,500. Additional funds were given from NTC reserves to make up the shortfall. NTC provided a total of **£10,370.72** towards the field purchase, with a further approximation of **£2,500** spent on legal fees.

The deeds to the field were finally transferred to Neyland Town Council on 14th May 1981! This began the drawing up of the lease to the Trustees of Nayland Athletics Club for a period of 42 years, with the permission to extend for a further 21 years and again a further 21 years after this, for a peppercorn rent of £1.00 per annum. The lease absolves NTC of all costs, responsibilities and legal proceedings in relation to the field and hands over complete and utter responsibility to the Trustees of the Neyland Athletics Club. The lease was completed and bound on 6th March 1984; however, it was agreed upon that the lease would be backdated to 6th March 1979, which was the date of Entry to the field. In essence, NTC are the legal owners of the land, however, all responsibility is transferred to the Trustees of Neyland Athletics Club.

Transfer Information

The first information I can find regarding beginning the process of the transfer of the field to the Athletic Club can be found in the minutes of the meeting of Full Council dated 12th January 2022. The minutes read as follows:

2898 TO DISCUSS THE RENEWAL OF THE LEASE ON THE FIELD AT THE ATHLETIC CLUB

Cllr. M Harry had asked for this to be discussed. It appears that the Lease was for 42 years, commencing in 1979. It has not been renewed or reviewed since 2015. Given that the Lease has now run out the Mayor proposed that the ground should be transferred back to the Athletics Club but asked for clarification of the details of the acquisition and the current legal position. Seconded by Cllr M Harry. Councillors agreed that the land needs protecting for games and leisure use and suggested that it be registered with Fields in Trust before any action was taken.

RESOLVED: **That clarification be obtained on the acquisition and legal position with regard to selling the field at the Athletic Club.**

From further investigation, I believe there was a delay in bringing this to Council due to the unprecedented social conditions derived from the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of the lease coming to an end on 6th March 2021.

Following the paper trail of minutes and communications with the Solicitor, it becomes apparent that a Transfer Deed was drawn up to protect the land in order for it to be continually and only used for sport

and leisure, in particular for the Neyland RFC, AFC and CC. An Overage Schedule was also drawn up depicting a requirement that if the land was ever to be sold, Neyland Town Council will be entitled to a percentage of any proceedings culminated from the sale of the land. Both the Transfer Deeds and Overage Schedule are attached for perusal.

There is a License Agreement between the Trustees of Neyland Athletic Club and Neyland Community School regarding their payment and usage of the field. This is an agreed upon and signed Licensing Agreement, which has not ever had any bearing upon Neyland Town Council. I have attached for perusal. This was drawn up for the School to Sub-Let the field during all term-time hours. I believe this was due to the commencement of the new school building, whereby the school lost their own playing field.

All of the above information has been culminated by a substantial investigation into the evidential trail of papers. These papers will be kept securely in the Clerk's office and are open to perusal upon request.

L. Matthews

12th March 2024.