

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL



PRESS RELEASE

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Marathon Wait Nearly Over for Sports Users

A ceremony in Anstey Park earlier this week marked the final hurdle in a project that has taken nearly ten years to come to fruition.

It was in March 2002 that Alton Town Council commissioned a feasibility study on the future of the Finnimore Sports Pavilion in the park, which recommended that the existing building did not lend itself to being upgraded to meet modern requirements and should be replaced.

It was at that point that the council embarked upon the long process of working with sports users on what was needed, gaining the necessary permissions, and, most difficult of all, trying to assemble funds from as many sources as possible to meet the £800,000 total cost.

Having secured grants from East Hampshire District Council and the Hampshire Playing Fields Association, together with contributions from developers for the improvement of public open space released by EHDC, it was the securing of a grant by Sport England last year which brought the amassed funds closer to the target and enabled a contract to be awarded to Tildan Construction. The Town Council will itself be contributing over £200,000 to the scheme, met in part from the disposal of property, and local Hampshire County Councillor Andrew Joy made a contribution from a budget for projects in his ward.

The Town Mayor of Alton, Cllr Robert Saunders welcomed many of those involved in the project and representatives of funding bodies to the park on Monday, where he unveiled a commemorative stone on the north east wall.

Watched also by representatives of groups that use or are based in the park, plus Councillors past and present, Cllr Saunders said "This project, the most expensive ever undertaken by the Town Council, took up a great deal of the council's time over the last

10 years. As with many projects, they seem to drag on for so long that you think they will never happen, and then all of a sudden, a major piece of the jigsaw falls into place and hey presto, it's happening before our very eyes! Whilst we look forward to completion in the New Year, which is very apt given the sporting significance of 2012, we are here today to thank all those involved in what had been a very long process."

Designed by architect Michael Weakley, the new facility will boast 8 changing rooms with doors straight onto the park, a first floor club room accessible to all, equipment and welfare facilities for ground staff, and new public toilets to serve the park. Whilst the footprint of the new pavilion is slightly larger than previous, due to a new wing on the south west side, it's carbon footprint will hopefully be smaller, as it contains many energy-saving devices such as a Ground Source Heat Pump.

Work started on site in late April, with demolition of the old pavilion in early May after the finish of the winter sports season. Alton Rugby Club, one of the main clubs based in the park, is currently using changing facilities kindly made available by nearby Eggar's School.

A condition of the award by Sport England, is that a Community Sport Liaison Officer be employed for two years, for which they are meeting the cost, to help ensure that the new facility meets its objectives in encouraging new sports in the park and encouraging existing clubs to maximise their potential.

The pavilion was named after Albert Finnimore, Chairman of Alton Urban District Council from 1959-61.

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Photograph available on request.