

Tennis club launch fundraising appeal for new clubhouse

ROWLEDGE Tennis Club have launched a fundraising appeal for a new clubhouse after their initial plans were thrown into disarray.

They had paid a company £10,000 deposit for a new timber-built headquarters to replace their tumbledown building. But during lockdown the firm went bust – and that money was lost.

The club now have to redouble their fundraising efforts to get proposals up and running again.

Sophie Penney, a member of the fundraising team, said the club had already spent a lot of funds on two new courts and fencing.

“We are only a small village club with around 200 members – and half of that figure is children – so losing that £10,000 was a big blow,” she said.

“We decided about four years ago to embark on the

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clubhouse project and it had taken a lot of work to get this far.

“After we had raised some of the money we were advised by the building company to put down a deposit – they said it would secure the price of the timber, and at the time it was available for a good price.

“But then we learned the firm had gone bust and that money was gone.

“It was a big disappointment – our club are all volunteers and they work hard for us.

“We weren’t looking to build anything large or fancy or fantastic – we don’t have a lot of space and want to put up something made of timber that members and visitors can use and be proud of.

“At the moment our club is rotting and it is damp and during lockdown, when the club hasn’t been open and no-one has been there, people have broken in and some of the windows are smashed. It is well past its best.

“We have a fantastic coach, Matt Marlow, who is trying to work with members and the youngsters, and he really needs somewhere to work out of too.”

A new clubhouse would cost around £40,000 – and the club still have around £25,000 left from their fundraising efforts.

“We just want to build somewhere parents can sit

and watch their children play, where people can pop in and have a cup of tea, with nice changing areas for our players and somewhere dry for people to get out of the rain during matches,” said Sophie.

“It won’t be large and it will probably won’t be painted and will be timber-coloured – we’re not looking for anything too grand.

“We want it to be as environmentally friendly as we can, so if we get enough money we’d like to look at solar panels and things like that.

“We are now raising funds to give us that final push so we can get things moving again.

“Rowledge is a lovely village and we just want to have a clubhouse we can use and be proud of.

“We are very lucky to already have the support of our sponsor The Oak Tree and Acorn Company, a local firm which sells gifts online, who have been very helpful.”

To make matters worse, the pandemic has meant the fundraising committee have had to cancel a number of key fundraising events over the past year. To donate, visit the GoFundMe page at <https://gotfund.me/aeft409> or email info@rowledge tennis.org.uk for more information.

