

# **Lifeline for Juniper Green tennis club as bulldozers move in**

**A massive fund-raising effort in double-quick time has resulted in Juniper Green tennis club standing on the brink of having their two courts refurbished.**

Some £50,000 had to be raised in less than a year to take advantage of the Lawn Tennis Association scheme which contributes half the cost of upgrading courts provided they are situated on local authority land.

Founded in 1891 but moved to City of Edinburgh Council land in 1907 Juniper Green TC satisfied that criteria.

The only trouble was that the scheme was about to expire...and both sportscotland and National Lottery were unable to assist financially on this occasion with the same applying to the Council.

Step up club chair-person Paul Murphy, a retired banker and tennis enthusiast who martialled resources, both financial and human with a bit of help, initially, from local MSP Sue Webber who had once played on the courts as a youngster.

Paul, pictured as he welcomed contractors on to the site this week for a job expected to be completed by the start of the tennis season in Spring, said: "Firstly, Sue Webber kindly helped me with some potential planning related issues and just

before Christmas contracts were signed with Sportex.

“It has been some journey, though, after it was recognised that the original blaes courts were not going to last forever.

“Also, the volunteers who kindly maintained the courts each year were starting to find it a challenge and I feared the club might soon start to struggle.”

Traditional blaes courts are particularly vulnerable to frost which can raise the line markings in winter.

Paul added: “After stumbling on the LTA Park Tennis Project our committee decided to use the £10,000 legacy left to us by a Mr Notman, local coal merchant, some years ago and which had lain untouched.

“That left £40,000 to find and some money came from selling five year fixed memberships and interest free loans.

“After that the begging bowl was brought out as we appealed to local businesses with organisations like the local Round Table and the Village Hall responding positively.

“The largest donation we had from a local business was £1000 (and) we had two such donations.

“Larger single donations were received from local organisations.

“We are a smaller than average club who don't enter teams in any leagues but it is important that we preserved the courts which will be tarmac based with an acrylic painted top.

“From seven months use to all year round use. That is now reality as we hope to increase the playing membership of around 165 mainly drawn from local families.

“Juniper Green is a lovely area but it is fair to say not over-endowed with sports facilities.

"I'm delighted that courts which have been at the centre of the village for nearly 130 years will continue as we look to expand everything from an over-50's programme to a kids coaching scheme run by Kenny Petrie who travels from Linlithgow to take classes.

"You bet there will be a grand opening and the search is on to find sponsors who further help to take our club forward."

Sue Webber Lothians MSP said: "As a young girl that can just about remember playing on these courts, I am thrilled that the Tennis Club has been able to secure funding and support from across the community and LTA /sportscotland, to allow these courts to be upgraded. It was long overdue.

"With an extended season and more modern surface, I know these new courts will allow Juniper Green Tennis Club to thrive, and I hope increase their membership and bring tennis to a wider audience. I will have to dust off my racquet in time for the big opening!"



Juniper Green Tennis Club chairperson Paul Murphy who has driven the new courts scheme with some help from MSP Sue Webber