



## Chelveston Village Hall Paddock Development Grant Application

### 1. Summary

The Trustees of the Educational Foundation are seeking a grant of £14,590 as a 75% contribution towards the £19,300 cost of developing the amenity paddock behind Chelveston Village Hall. The remaining funds will come from reserves allocated for the project.

The paddock is registered as an Asset of Community Value. It is the only large, grassed area in the Village that can be used for community events. However, in its current condition, the paddock is only usable for 6 months of the year, and even then, 20% of its area is cordoned off and unusable for safety reasons. Rabbits and moles have colonised the field, creating tunnels and burrows that are hazardous for the public.

A 2-year, 3 phase project is underway to address all these issues. Buried rabbit fencing will be installed and the surface will be levelled to recover the lost land. Re-enforcing mesh will then be installed to create an all-weather grassed surface that can be used all year round. The project will also install a new storage shed in the paddock on the reclaimed land. This will release other storage space which can be used for bulky Village Hall equipment which is currently cluttering the perimeter of the floor in the main Hall.

This application is seeking a grant of £6,430 in 2024 for phases A and B. Phase C will require a grant of £8,160 in 2025. The second grant for phase C in 2025 would be contingent on the successful achievement of phases A and B.

These projects are part of a new 10-year property strategy<sup>1</sup> developed by the Foundation which is guiding our project investments through to 2033.

### 2. Background

The “L-shaped” field to the side and behind Chelveston Village Hall was originally purchased in 2012 using endowment funds originally released in 1908 by the sale of land in Hargrave. Part of this newly acquired field was used to develop a basic car park in 2013. The grass surface was re-enforced with mesh and a gravelled track was installed. The Windfarm Trust then helped us complete car park facilities in 2018/2019, with the installation of improved drainage and lighting.

The remaining part of the original field was left undeveloped, apart from the installation of stock fencing. Maintenance was a problem, with only a donated hand mower available to cut over 800 square metres of rough grass. In 2016, the Windfarm Trust supported our purchase of a professional lawn tractor and secure storage shed, which was installed in the Village Hall garden. The lawn tractor has enabled us to keep the grass on the car park cut and is powerful enough to mow the rougher paddock. When it was purchased, most of the paddock was flat enough for mowing but around 9% of it was already unusable because the ground was too rough. It was riddled with old rabbit burrows and mole hills. This area was cut with a strimmer.

Since 2013 the useable areas of the paddock have hosted the annual dog show, dog training sessions, military vehicle displays, camping by local scout groups, horse tack sales, and a branch of the Caravan Club. Unfortunately, the surface cannot be used for vehicular or pedestrian access between the end of October and early May as it is too soft. Even dogs cause too much damage.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://villagehall.chelveston.org.uk/finance/2024/Educational-Foundation-Property-Strategy-2023-2033>

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The dog training sessions were useful, as the regular presence of dogs deterred the rabbits from extending their warren. Unfortunately, the dog training classes did not restart after the COVID-19 pandemic. The rabbits have taken full advantage of this and are now colonising the field at a rate of 30 square metres a year. They have now undermined the roadside stock fence creating gaps beneath it and loosening one post. Their burrows now extend over 9 metres into the 44-metre field. The burrows are a hazard for pedestrian access and the lawn tractor cannot safely be driven over the area to cut the grass. 20% of the amenity paddock is now unusable and coned off. The rabbits now run freely out of the paddock into the car park and then into the Village Hall garden. They are now creating new burrows in the garden.

Expert advice has been sought, and the conclusion is that we need to “seal off” the paddock and garden using rabbit fencing buried deep beneath the ground on all boundaries. Safe use of the amenity space will never be possible if rabbits or moles can create a network of unseen burrows. The amenity paddock covers 26% of the Foundation’s land. It is a valuable community asset, and we need to ensure that it is developed and secured for future generations.

### 3. The proposed solution

A three phase solution is proposed for these problems, allowing the use of the paddock to be maximised:

- Phase A:** Permanently deal with the rabbit infestation by installing buried rabbit fencing around the perimeter of the paddock and down the fence between the car park and the Village Hall garden. The rough areas will then be levelled and reclaimed.
- Phase B:** Install a new high security shed in the corner of the amenity paddock on the reclaimed land. This would be used to house the grounds maintenance equipment which is currently stored in the shed in the Village Hall garden. The new shed would then free up the existing shed to house the bulky equipment from the Hall. Lighting would be installed inside the existing shed to permit evening access to equipment.
- Phase C:** Strengthen the paddock surface with grass mesh like that used in the car park to create an all-weather surface, usable as an overflow car park for Church or Village Hall events, even during winter.

The works for each phase are described below:

#### ***Phase A - Installing rabbit fencing.***

A turf cutter would be used to remove a 600mm strip of turf around three sides of the paddock. A trench would then be excavated in front of the existing stock fence at the B645 ditch, at least 450mm deep and 300mm wide. This would break into the current warren dispersing the rabbits. Rabbit mesh would then be buried in the trench and backfilled, with the rabbit mesh going across the surface and lapping up the new fence by 800mm. The purpose of this mesh is to stop the rabbits finding a way under the stock fencing. Once the mesh is installed, the turf would be replaced and rolled flat. This process would be repeated for the other paddock boundaries to prevent rabbits from running across the surface of the paddock into the School House and Village Hall gardens. Whilst the work is underway, the opportunity would be taken to install a lockable pedestrian gate from the School House garden into the paddock. The new gate would make garden maintenance much easier. Garden tools and mowers are currently stored in the Village Hall garden shed and it is necessary to carry or push them out on to the Caldecott Road around both properties. The gate could also be used for access by the lawn tractor to allow the School House grass to be mown more efficiently. This cannot be done at present as the tractor is uninsured and unlicensed to travel on the public highway or footway.

Along the boundary of the Village Hall garden and paddock to the car park, rabbit mesh would be clipped to the fence and turned out at the bottom onto the car park mesh where it would be pegged down to allow grass to grow through. This would prevent rabbits from finding gaps where the grass mesh of the car park has sunk.

The rough ground in the paddock would then be levelled using a digger bucket and rolled using a heavy-duty agricultural roller to even out the surface and consolidate the loose ground around the burrows. After reseeding if needed, we will recover nearly 20% of the paddock area for amenity use.

**Phase B - Installing additional storage.**

Once the rabbit fencing is completed, a 150mm deep foundation pad would be excavated in the corner of the reclaimed paddock for the new storage shed. The foundation would then be filled with type 1 hardcore and consolidated using a vibrating plate. A high security shed would be purchased and installed. Once the works are completed, the gravel on the car park track would need to be refreshed and consolidated after disturbance by delivery lorries.

**Phase C - Installing grass protection mesh.**

In 2025, once a full season has elapsed, we can evaluate the success of the rabbit fencing and consider the next step of the project to create an all-weather surface for the amenity paddock. A medium/heavy grade grass protection mesh<sup>2</sup> would be pegged down across the whole of the paddock. This is the same mesh that was used on the car park. It offers a good all-weather surface in all but the wettest of conditions. This can be used by all foot traffic and medium duty vehicular traffic. Once bedded in after a season, the mesh largely disappears as the grass grows through it.

The creation of a mesh reinforced area would permit year-round use of the paddock for amenity purposes. It would also allow the paddock to be used for occasional overflow parking during Village fayres and festivals. This would be particularly valuable during the autumn and winter months catering for the Christmas Fayre at the Church in November and the Snowdrop Festival in February. The project would add 28 parking spaces. During festivals, we currently need to close the Village Hall as there is insufficient parking capacity in the existing car park. For the rest of the year, the paddock gate would remain locked to prevent its unauthorised use. It would be opened only for stewarded parking.

At the wettest times of year, the main car park can become muddy after heavy use. With a grass mesh reinforced paddock, we could divert cars away from the worst areas of the car park allowing it to recover. This would avoid cars getting stuck and minimise the mud brought into the Hall.

The overall solution incorporating all three phases is shown in figure 1.

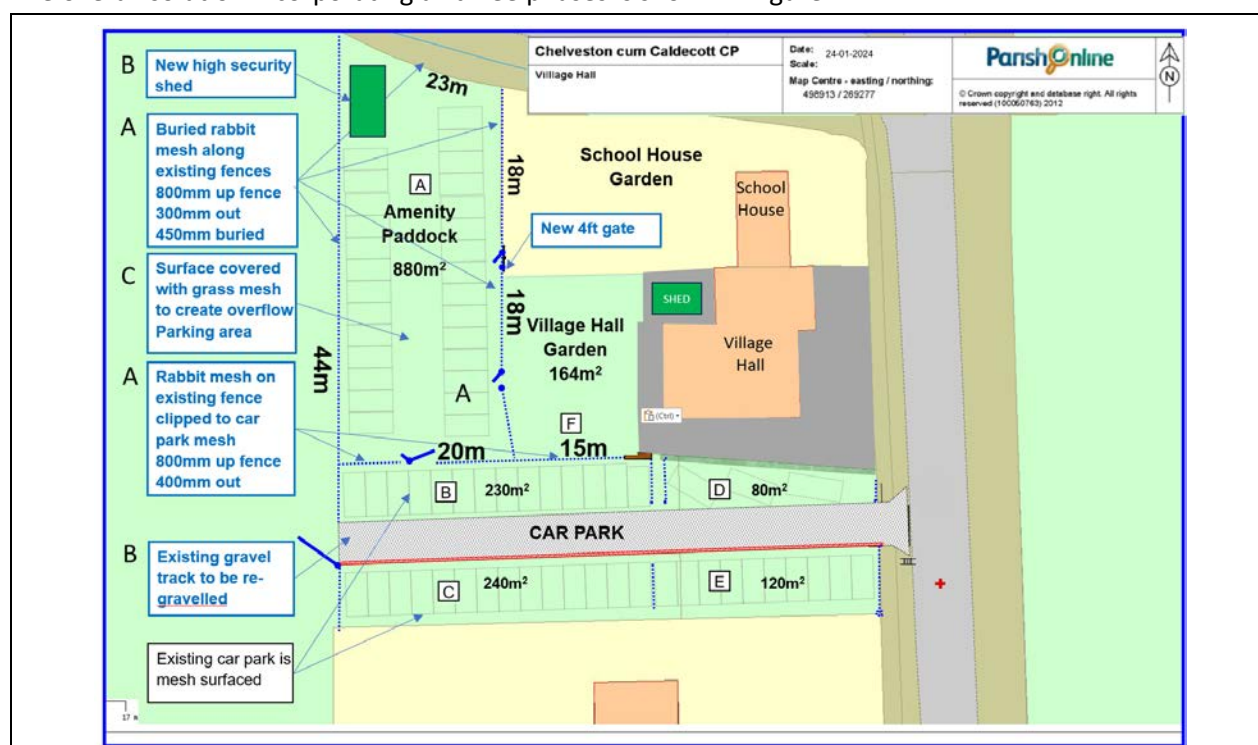


Figure 1 - Rabbit mesh, gate to garden, shed and overspill parking for 28 cars on all weather grass mesh

<sup>2</sup> Grass protection mesh <https://www.green-tech.co.uk/ground-reinforcement/grass-and-turf-reinforcement-mesh/grass-protecta-heavy-145mm>

## 4. Summary of costs and phasing

### Phase A – Installing rabbit fencing and reclaiming land.

Estimated cost:	£3,500
Duration:	1 week
Proposed timing:	May 2024
Source of funds:	75% grant funding, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	None – machinery would arrive and depart outside class times
Loss of hire income:	None

### Phase B – Installing additional storage shed.

Estimated cost:	£4,920
Duration:	1 week
Proposed timing:	May 2024
Source of funds:	75% grant funding, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	None – machinery would arrive and depart outside class times
Loss of hire income:	None

### Phase C – Installing grass protection mesh.

Estimated cost:	£10,900
Duration:	1 week
Proposed timing:	May 2025 – contingency on rabbit fencing being successful
Source of funds:	75% grant funding, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	None – machinery would arrive and depart outside class times
Loss of hire income:	None

## 5. Project Cost Detail

Item	Supplier	Product	Quantity	Unit cost (inc VAT)	Cost
<b>2024 - Rabbit fence installation</b>					
1	Suregreen	<a href="#">1200mm x 50m rabbit mesh</a>	2	£ 83.48	£ 166.96
2	Suregreen	<a href="#">600mm x 50m rabbit mesh</a>	3	£ 54.99	£ 164.97
3	Screwfix	<a href="#">40mm staple nails</a>	1	£ 19.99	£ 19.99
4	Screwfix	<a href="#">Fencing hammer for staples</a>	1	£ 20.99	£ 20.99
5	Screwfix	<a href="#">1600 Netting clips</a>	1	£ 29.99	£ 29.99
6	Screwfix	<a href="#">Fencing pliers for clips</a>	1	£ 39.99	£ 39.99
7	Screwfix	<a href="#">Fence snips</a>	1	£ 5.69	£ 5.69
8	UK Timber	<a href="#">Treated softwood field gate</a>	1	£ 107.99	£ 107.99
9	UK Timber	<a href="#">Treated softwood gate post</a>	2	£ 46.19	£ 92.38
10	UK Timber	<a href="#">Larch fencing battens</a>	2	£ 3.59	£ 7.18
11	UK Timber	<a href="#">Gate hinge set</a>	1	£ 47.99	£ 47.99
12	UK Timber	<a href="#">Self locking catch set</a>	1	£ 25.19	£ 25.19
13	Screwfix	<a href="#">Combination padlock</a>	1	£ 24.99	£ 24.99
14	Hirebase	<a href="#">0.8 tonne micro digger (week hire)</a>	1	£ 310.00	£ 310.00
15	Hirebase	<a href="#">Turf cutter (week hire)</a>	1	£ 180.00	£ 180.00
16		Delivery and collection	2	£ 44.00	£ 180.00
17	KG Contracts	Labour	10	£ 175.00	£ 1,750.00
18		Contingency	1	£ 300.00	£ 300.00
<b>Subtotal Phase A - Rabbit Fencing</b>					<b>£3,474.30</b>

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Item	Supplier	Product	Quantity	Unit cost (inc VAT)	Cost
<b>2024 - Additional equipment storage</b>					
1	Asgard	<a href="#">Storage shed (4.2m x 2.1m) - with installation</a>	1	£ 3,479.00	£ 3,479.00
2	Screwfix	<a href="#">Additional security locks</a>	2	£ 48.29	£ 96.58
3	Scaffolding Direct	<a href="#">Weed control fabric</a>	1	£ 25.00	£ 25.00
4	Scaffolding Direct	<a href="#">Fabric pins</a>	5	£ 4.74	£ 23.70
5	JW Clark	Hardcore	4	£ 65.40	£ 261.60
6	KG Contracts	Labour	2	£ 175.00	£ 350.00
7	BED Electrical	Cabling to existing shed and Internal lighting	1	£ 150.00	£ 150.00
8	A. V. & D. Camp	Restoring car park track with gravel dressing	1	£ 360.00	£ 360.00
9		Contingency	1	£ 360.00	£ 360.00
<b>Subtotal Phase B - Additional storage</b>					<b>£ 5,105.88</b>

Item	Supplier	Product	Quantity	Unit cost (inc VAT)	Cost
<b>2025 - Overflow parking provision</b>					
1	UltimateOne	<a href="#">Heavy duty grass mesh</a>	8	£ 426.60	£ 3,412.80
2	UltimateOne	<a href="#">Medium duty grass mesh</a>	12	£ 299.25	£ 3,591.00
3	UltimateOne	<a href="#">170 x 70 x 6 fixing pins (100 per bag)</a>	32	£ 42.00	£ 1,344.00
4	UltimateOne	Delivery	1	£ 180.00	£ 180.00
5	KG Contracts	Labour	10	£ 185.00	£ 1,850.00
6		Contingency	1	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
<b>Subtotal Phase C - Overflow parking</b>					<b>£10,877.80</b>
<b>2024 projects - Phases A &amp; B</b>					<b>£8,580.18</b>
<b>2025 project - Phase C</b>					<b>£10,877.80</b>
<b>Grand Total over 2024/2025</b>					<b>£19,457.98</b>

## 6. Charitable purpose

The 2010 charitable scheme for the Foundation states the following:

*The Trustees will provide and maintain a combined Village Hall/Educational Institute in the Chelveston School premises for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Chelveston-cum-Caldecott and surrounding environs without distinction of political, religious or other opinions for meetings, lectures and classes, and for other forms of recreational activity with the object of promoting the education of and improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.*

Reclaiming the paddock and creating an amenity area for all year round community use, will improve the conditions of life for the inhabitants of the Parish of Chelveston-cum-Caldecott and surrounding environs.

## 7. Conclusion

This grant application covers a 2-year project, which itself is part of a 10-year property strategy. If this grant application is successful, only the 2024 tranche of the grant would be drawn down this year. The 2025 tranche would only be requested after a thorough evaluation of the first 2 phases to ensure that the project is on track and delivering its objectives.