



## CLUB SUCCESS STORY

# NAME IN LIGHTS FOR EAST BERGHOLT

## How a progressive village tennis club secured new floodlights through crowdfunding

East Bergholt Tennis Club, Suffolk

East Bergholt is a village club in the Babergh District of Suffolk, offering three newly renovated floodlit courts and a warm family oriented welcome. The club operates the tennis courts by agreement with the Parish Council, under a long term lease.

## BACKGROUND

By Spring 2020 East Bergholt Tennis Club was run down with a small and dwindling membership. In August 2020 a new and progressive committee was formed, and a new Head Coach appointed, Matthew Watson. The vision of the new committee was simple: to make tennis accessible to all local people with good quality facilities.

To this end, Matthew led a comprehensive coaching programme equally targeted at adults and juniors, and funds were sought to refurbish the courts. It was discovered that some residual club funds were held by the Parish Council and these were used to resurface and repaint the courts and repair fences.

The new look club quickly attracted members, largely thanks to Matthew's popular coaching, and has achieved extraordinary growth from just 12 adult and 8 junior members in mid 2020 to a present very healthy membership of nearly 300.



## 💡 THE LIGHT PROBLEM

However, by Winter 2020 it was clear that the ageing floodlights would be a threat to continuing success. The ability to offer daytime and evening coaching all year round is essential for a small club to flourish. However our lights were approaching thirty years old, and were increasingly ineffective.

The club now had a familiar problem. Membership fees had been kept low in order to get as many people as possible playing. There was and is no intention of changing this. But all reserves had been used up restoring the playing surface. We now needed to find a further £20,000 to replace our lights. We knew that without new lights the club would struggle to survive.

## 👤 HOW THE CAMPAIGN DEVELOPED

After discussions with the LTA and Sport England we decided to run a Crowdfunder campaign. We did this in Spring 21, and successfully raised £10,543, including a £3000 grant from Sport England. We received a further £8000 from Babergh District Council, and the balance was funded by membership fees. In retrospect, we feel that our success was due to having a realistic target for our Crowdfunder, our enthusiastic membership, and our vision for an open and accessible club. This aligned with the Council's objectives to encourage grass roots sport in the district, and we were able to turn this into a clear case to win support.

## 💡 THE OUTCOME AND FUTURE

- **We now have state of the art LED lighting**, providing light levels across all courts to LTA tournament standards
- **The new lights are more environmentally friendly**, much cheaper to run, and require less maintenance than the old halogen lighting
- **The courts are very well used with nearly 100 adults** in organised sessions every week
- **Over 70 juniors take part** in the weekly coaching programme, with two undertaking Level Two coaching qualifications
- **Our current total membership stands at 296**
- **The Committee has an ambitious development plan** and is now focusing on raising money to fund the next stage, which is to improve clubhouse facilities.

# 170

## PLAYERS

### ATTEND EACH WEEK



“

As a club and a committee, we explored different avenues to raise money. There was only a month to try and get as many donations as possible, so we worked hard to create an engaging crowdfunding campaign. As a result of new floodlights, growing membership and coaching programme, East Bergholt TC is now an important source of social and physical interaction for local people. We believe in accessible tennis for everyone, with low fees and real community spirit. The club was almost at the point of folding, but we have transformed it.”

**Matthew Watson,**  
committee member and club coach



## FOLLOW US FOR MORE

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