



**Innovation during the Covid-19 pandemic:
Volunteers and voluntary sports
organisations in England**

Case Study 5: Purchasing own land to offer an outdoor format of the sport

Research report for Sport England

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Purchasing own land to offer an outdoor format of the sport

Sport: Archery

Size of club: c.250 members

No of volunteers: c240 (all members are volunteers)

Own premises/land: Own land

Age range: All ages.

Paid staff: Coaches only

What is the innovation?

After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the club quickly realised that their members would feel uncomfortable playing archery indoors. The club, therefore, bought their own land to host archery outdoors. With the land, they were able to host target archery, as before, but also introduce a field archery course. Field archery involves walking around a course between targets, which are set at varying distances, heights and angles. Since the club included a 'men in sheds' group, this group of volunteers were able to work on the land and develop the field course ready for when the sport could return after the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

Why was this innovation implemented?

The innovation was implemented to ensure the club would be sustainable. The club wanted to create a facility that would attract 'pay and play' visitors and new members and allow them to host tournaments.

“The real bottom line was to keep the club sustainable in terms of the income we generate.”

What impact did this innovation have on the club as a whole?

The outdoor facilities, especially the field archery course, have attracted new 'pay and play' visitors and members. Membership has quadrupled.

“The waiting list to attend the beginners' courses is the biggest we've ever had.... The field course appeals to a different type of individual to the boys and girls who don't want to stand on a range shooting the same target for 144 times. They want to go out and explore the countryside.”

What impact did this innovation have on sports volunteers?

Acquiring the land created extra tasks for the club's volunteers. For example, volunteers are needed to regularly update and amend the field course. The club has also introduced several environmental initiatives on the land, which requires

volunteers to plant trees and manage the land in a sustainable way. Although there are now more jobs, the club has been effective at recruiting volunteers. The club regards all of its members as volunteers and tries to create a sense of ownership and cohesion. By creating a sense of trust and promoting the value of volunteering, the club has developed a sense of community among its volunteers. Volunteers are given training across the range of volunteering activities so that they are multi-skilled, which helps to ensure the club is sustainable. There have also been various initiatives across the age groupings.

“Club volunteering spans right across the club. We've got the men in sheds group but we've also got a big group of younger members boys and girls doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards and other programs for schools.”

What were the challenges faced when implementing this innovation?

The main challenge for volunteers was finding enough time to complete the land purchase and develop the outdoor facilities. That said, the club had a board of directors with a range of skills and experiences. Where help was required, they sought out funding and support from various sources.

What prevented this innovation from happening before Covid-19 restrictions?

Before Covid-19, the club had not identified the appetite for field archery. Covid-19 provided a focus to move forward:

“[Covid-19] focused the innovation. Previously, we were a bit scatter gun, you know, it'd be nice to do this, nice to do that. Then, all of a sudden, we knew we needed to do this.”



Eight short case studies that showcase innovative practices in sports volunteering:

Case Study 1: Introducing technology to enhance participation

Case Study 2: Forming buddy groups to enhance engagement

Case Study 3: Using a survey of members to spark modernisation

Case Study 4: Using social media to attract new members

Case Study 5: Purchasing own land to offer an outdoor format of the sport

Case Study 6: Getting involved in the local community

Case Study 7: Implementing club membership management app

Case Study 8: Increasing Volunteer Inclusion and Diversity