

WITNESHAM WASPS FOOTBALL CLUB REPORT FOR 2023/24 SEASONS

All youth teams play in the Suffolk Youth Football League (SYFL) on Saturdays, except where denoted with * as being in the Ipswich & Suffolk Youth Football League (ISYFL) which plays on Sunday mornings.

U17s* → sitting 3rd in their league and have reached their age group cup final

U16s Yellows → likely to win Division 1 (currently top) and have reached their age group cup final

U16s Blacks → are currently bottom of Division 2 having stepped up a division

U14s → sitting 6th in Division 3

U13s → sitting 6th in Division 3

U12s Yellows → sitting 2nd in Division 2 (3 points behind with a game in hand)

U12s Blacks → currently bottom of Division 4

In addition, the club continues to promote grassroots soccer to children of all ages, and we have teams from U7s through to U11s in development leagues.

In total we have 145 boys and girls registered to, and playing for, the club.

The pitches at Witnesham continue to churn up in the wet and wintry weather. We will likely look at using Parkers Pitches again this year to treat the field in the closed season. The club will liaise with the Parish on dates and type of treatment, etc.

In terms of development of the club, we made significant investment in the equipment at Witnesham including new goals and nets, as well as a ride-on mower so we can keep the grass short on the playing area (the monthly contracted grass cutting is often insufficient to keep the grass short for football).

We have been mostly disappointed at being the victim of theft and vandalism. Theft of the cones the club had purchased to try to help parking restrictions on the high street, but these cones have been stolen. As such, the club is reluctant to spend further funds on more cones at this stage.

In terms of vandalism, having spent over £7,500 on development of equipment at Witnesham, within days of the new goals and nets being put up, some of the netting was cut. Despite repairs made by the club volunteers, we have seen repeated cutting of the nets on 4 occasions through the season.

Replacement of these nets will cost the club in the region of £200 per pair. We are hopeful that this vandalism will cease and it will not result in further expense to be borne by the club.

With the growth of our younger teams, we have seen a very challenging season with regards to games at Witnesham and the traffic that this brings. As noted above, we have tried to help the residents by purchase and use of traffic cones, but this has not been as successful as we would all hope given the theft of the club's property, which has left the road at the mercy of visitors parking wantonly.

Looking ahead, in the 2024/25 season, we will be moving three teams away from Witnesham for their home fixtures. This will reduce the total number of teams using the Witnesham field for

Saturday games, and hopefully will help towards alleviating the traffic along the road – however this is not something the club can do on its own. We need the village residents to help with the security of our equipment, and we may then be able to purchase more cones to help manage parking on the high street.

Exciting news for the coming season is the re-birth of an adult team. We have a manager and coaching team ready, with over 25 interested players and have applied to the Suffolk and Ipswich League to be re-admitted for adult football. Home games will be played at St Audry's in Melton.

This will be a major step in our ambitions to bridge the gap for our youth players to see a pathway into adult football.

Peter Rolland

Club Secretary – Witnesham WASPS