

BMX – Opening Day – 25 May 2008

Hundreds of people turned out on Sunday to see the opening of the first Regional Standard BMX Racing Track in Kent. The track commissioned by Herne & Broomfield Parish Council is at Ford Road, Broomfield, on the former land-fill site. Councillors were joined by special guests and local residents to watch Kaddy Lee-Preston cut the ribbon. Kaddy is a BBC South East Weather Presenter.

Parish Council Chairman, Bill Whiffen, thanked everyone for coming and said "This is the only regional standard BMX racing track in Kent. As BMX is now an Olympic sport we hope that the young people of our parish may gain the skills necessary to perhaps compete in 2012."

"The Parish Council is proud to have been able to provide this impressive facility with little cost to our residents. We would like to thank our grant funders including the East Kent Partnership, SEEDA, KCC and Entrust.

We are grateful to Deacon Landscapes for their help and expertise. By working with them we have been able to fund the majority of the cost of this project through the fees paid for tipping the soil that we needed for planting, landscaping and building the circuit."

Mr Whiffen said "It was also a pleasure to work with Phil Charnley, the track designer, Steve Bodey, Russ Parsons and the members of the East Kent BMX Club."

He explained that site was originally a refuse tip and then a traveller's camp. "When that closed Carol Davis suggested that we lease the site and create a community park. But when I first saw it I was horrified. The buildings had been demolished, apparently by Godzilla. All I could see was rubble and rubbish whereas Carol could see wild flower meadows, trees and picnic areas, which was quite worrying really. But she managed to persuade us that it was achievable. Then Peter Vickery-Jones bought Steve and Russ to one of our meetings. They asked, rather disingenuously I thought, whether there was anywhere we might be able to put a modest BMX track for the local youngsters. This is what we ended up with."

Cllr Whiffen said that Carol's (Cllr Davis') main responsibility is the park, which has yet to be planted and she is devoting a great deal of time to this; (Cllr) Ann Blatherwick, who fortunately for the parish council is a chartered civil engineer, is working closely with the contractor on the whole project and Peter (Cllr Vickery-Jones) test rode the track. He crashed!

Cllr Whiffen finished by saying "However the driving force behind this scheme is our parish clerk, Monica Blyth. This is a considerable undertaking for a parish council with only one employee. The 50 year lease alone was a nightmare. Then there was the additional grant funding applications needed to be filled in. No one is indispensable but in Monica's case I wouldn't want to put it to the test.

This project is an example of just what can be achieved when everyone pulls in the same direction."

He then gave a very warm welcome to Weather Girl, Kaddy Lee-Preston, who had kindly agreed to open the track and accepted the councillor's challenge to ride it. Kaddy then cut the ribbon and released twenty white doves, kindly supplied by White Doves of Kent.

Kaddy was then kitted up with helmet, gloves and a BMX bike, the hydraulic gate was set. The crowd cheered as the gate clanged down and the guest of honour rode the track with two local young girls, both named Emily. Kaddy said she was a bit apprehensive to begin with and didn't know what to expect but she found it very exciting.

Wave after wave of riders rode the track. There were demonstration races by East Kent BMX Club and riders from as far afield as Bournemouth and Dagenham.