



A dramatic transformation

England's recent success on the field has helped Copley CC among others to rebuild its facilities and focus on the future

Simply put, when England win it's a good thing for grassroots cricket. A healthy period for the senior teams is felt in cricket clubs up and down the country, as Richard Hoyle, the chairman of Copley CC, near Halifax

in West Yorkshire, explains. "The success of the England teams really does filter down into grass roots cricket. The 2005 Ashes win had a significant effect on our junior membership, which increased by 50 players in one year."

Copley CC has always been a progressive and popular club but with 50 budding Freddie Flintoffs now on the books, Hoyle realised the club had to plan for its future. In 2005, Copley agreed to pursue two key goals: to improve its ageing, inadequate facilities and to expand its already vibrant and enthusiastic junior section. This plan, laid down seven years ago, culminated in April of this year with the unveiling of a magnificent new pavilion and a series of eye-catching refurbishments to the club's scoreboard, sight screens and nets. Even the benches around the boundary had been spruced up.

"It's been a dramatic transformation," says Hoyle. "Our facilities had been in need of a significant upgrade for some time. The old pavilion had been built 30 years ago and was on its last legs. We first became one of the ECB's Focus Clubs in 2005 and, with the help of ECB's Funding and Facilities department, our long-term plan to develop the facilities started. Furthermore we needed help with raising the funds to make our plans possible and this is where the guidance of the ECB became vital. We made a commitment to think about the next generation."

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Before (right) and after (above) – the Copley CC Pavilion. Left: Tim Bresnan and Mike Gatting pitched in with the renovations



Copley CC prides itself on its close links with the community and its forward-looking programme of regeneration and youth development would not have been possible without its many coaches, volunteers and charitable donations. The club estimates that it has received the equivalent of £40,000 in free or discounted materials to upgrade its facilities, and that local tradesmen have offered up £10,000 of their skilled labour free of charge. In one example of the community's generosity to the club, a 24-hour bike-a-thon raised £5,000.

However, this is not the whole story. Copley has also received generous funding and support from a cheerily large number of companies and organisations committed to helping club cricket survive and thrive, including the ECB, the Yorkshire Cricket Board, SITA and Calderdale Council, a host of nearby schools and sporting teams and a long list of local businesses. The effort has also helped to forge even closer links between club and community,

including a number of groups outside cricket who now take advantage of the new facilities. "It's taken a lot of drive and effort to redevelop the club," explains Hoyle. "We've been very fortunate to receive funding and guidance, not just from the ECB. A lot of people in the club and wider community have put in a lot of effort, in terms of fundraising and by physically constructing the new pavilion. That makes me proud, because the Copley Community Cricket Clubhouse Challenge is a project that has embraced the whole community. Everybody's involved. This project has galvanised the club, which is positive for our future."

Copley's involvement with the ECB's NatWest CricketForce programme has been one of those galvanising forces, not least when Yorkshire and England stars Michael Vaughan, Katherine Brunt and Tim Bresnan joined the club for the NatWest CricketForce Fundraiser event last August. "There was huge interest in three England players coming down to our village cricket

club," says Hoyle with pride. Former England captain Mike Gatting, now ECB's Managing Director Cricket Partnerships, has been another supporter. Copley was a NatWest CricketForce National County Showcase Club for 2012.

You only have to see the club's new pavilion – built to be energy efficient and sustainable – to appreciate what this series of collaborations has achieved. But has the regeneration of Copley's facilities translated where it counts? Again, Hoyle is optimistic.

"It might be a coincidence, but our first team did win the Parish Cup last year; the first time we'd won this prestigious local cup competition in 20 years."

Copley now has more than 110 junior members in six age groups and a burgeoning girls section.

"Three quarters of the players in our senior teams have graduated from our youth section," says Hoyle. "And one of Copley's young players, Oliver Hannon-Dalby, is now a member of Yorkshire's squad."

"What you want as a chairman is that the players who go on to play at higher levels still keep a soft spot for the club they started with. Players often come back to play for us in their 30s and 40s, and many become coaches. That's one of the things we hope for. It completes the circle." ●

ECB support for clubs

ECB invested capital in 464 grassroots cricket projects in 2011, which had a total value of £47m including partnership funding. In addition to the various funding streams available, there is a wealth of information and support material for clubs on the ECB website. For more information on funding and support for cricket clubs go to www.ecb.co.uk/places