

Pubwatch scheme launches this weekend

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How far would you go to play table tennis in your area?

Members of The Horley & District Pubwatch Scheme have had to wait 16 months to install concrete table tennis tables into their local area, but they are about to enjoy the fruits of their extensive labour.

The plucky group from Surrey conceived the 'Pubwatch Ping Pong Project' in November 2011. They were looking for an idea that would 'benefit the whole community' and came up with a scheme to raise funds for six concrete table tennis tables.

However, progressing the project from inception to completion wasn't as easy as the group had first hoped. Jerry Hudson, Treasurer for the Horley & District Pubwatch Scheme, explained how difficult it was to get the required financial backing:

"Raising funds for the project took longer than we anticipated given the current economic climate, especially in pubs. However, one year later the funds are in place and the project is now a reality.

"The Pubwatch Ping Pong Project is a fine example of how community pubs and clubs get involved and support their local area. Table tennis is a sport for all ages and is a fun way to get fit and bring the community together."

The group's vision has finally materialised into the launch at the Horley Recreation Ground (Surrey RH6 7HJ) this Saturday 30th March. Joining the celebration will be Olympian and No. 1 Female British table tennis player Joanna Parker, who comes from nearby Chertsey herself.

She appreciated the effort put in to get the tables in place: "I have been speaking with Jerry and he seems really excited about the launch.

For me it is great to see that there are people willing to put so much time and effort into raising funds for such a good cause. It's a way to bring people together, socialise and get some good, healthy fresh air at the same time!"

She added: "As a professional player I appreciate the need to get children involved at a young age. With more schemes like this there is potential to get a lot more children involved, which will eventually strengthen the standard of table tennis in our country.

"I hope this project will encourage other communities to do the same thing."

The group is one of the first in the UK to deliver such a project, and Mr Hudson is grateful for the help they have

received along the way.

He said: "The scheme has been well received and supported by local authorities, the English Table Tennis Association and many local businesses.

"In addition to funds from Pubwatch members, further funding was received from Sport England, The Gatwick Airport Community Trust and Surrey County Councillors."

Mike Roberts, Chairman of the Gatwick Airport Community Trust, was proud to be a part of the successful project. He exclaimed: "The Pubwatch Ping Pong Scheme to install six concrete tables in Horley is a great example of a project that supports and benefits the local community in areas closest to the airport.

"Gatwick Airport Community Trust awarded a grant to the scheme last year and we are delighted that installation is now complete and the scheme will be launched soon."

Russell Moore

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