



PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11 AM ON 12 MARCH 2022

Phoenix Lacrosse Club Rises from the Ashes

Newbury, 12 March 2022

Students, parents, supporters and local dignitaries celebrated the launch of the Phoenix Lacrosse Club at St Bartholomew's School, Newbury, on Saturday. Since its first practice at the beginning of January, the club has recruited 53 members aged 11 to 18, predominantly from St Bart's and other state schools in West Berkshire, but with some coming from as far away as Winchester and Amesbury. The club competes against leading independent schools and in regional tournaments, often winning by a substantial margin. It has been successful in securing funding from charities, local companies and the general public, and has plans for outreach to local primary and secondary schools later in the year. Says Club Chair, Alan Moon, "Lacrosse is a fantastic sport, and we want to ensure it is open to everyone in the local area. Ultimately, we hope to see one of our members go all the way to the 2028 Olympics."

State school involvement

The club was formed by parents, after St Bart's took the difficult decision to discontinue competitive lacrosse. The school has a long tradition of competing successfully in lacrosse, and St Bart's players have gone on to play the sport nationally and internationally. The club aims to continue this tradition, and has competed in the Marlborough College Invitational Tournament, in the South West Schools' Lacrosse Rally at Sherborne School and against Rendcomb College and St Mary's Calne. It also has outstanding invitations to play at Stowe School, Claremont School, and St Helen's and St Katharine's School Abingdon. Zeta John, Logistics Secretary, said "It has been wonderful to watch the girls playing lacrosse matches again after the pandemic robbed them of almost 2 years of match play. They have had the opportunity to compete against Marlborough College, St Mary's Calne and Rendcomb College, and they have done so well. They have won matches, lost matches but always played with enthusiasm, camaraderie and huge smiles. The club is so very proud of them all and is looking forward to next season and what we can achieve together."

Widespread support

Phoenix Lacrosse Club has been successful in securing grants from The Lacrosse Foundation and Legacy Leisure, sponsorship from Oxford PharmaGenesis and crowdfunding from parents, St Bart's alumni and members of the public. It is also grateful for the support of the South East Women's Lacrosse Association and England Lacrosse, and St Bart's School, which provides pitches for the club's practices and matches at a reduced rate. Says Amit Biswas of The Lacrosse Foundation, "Lacrosse is a tremendous sport – demanding and rewarding in equal measure. As we at The Lacrosse Foundation seek to broaden participation in lacrosse in the run-up to the 2028 Olympics, our first priority is to support schools and clubs that involve state school students in the sport."





Health and wellbeing

The role of sport in children's health and wellbeing has never been important than at the end of pandemic that prevented young people from exercising and staying fit, and has left some feeling isolated and anxious. Garry Poulson, Director of Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, says "The Volunteer Centre has enjoyed supporting and advising this group of dedicated volunteers to establish Phoenix Lacrosse for West Berkshire. Sport is a vital element of society for our physical health and mental wellbeing. Covid has taught us that leading healthy and active lives can help us to stave off the worst that the pandemic could throw at us."

National competitions

"We still hope to persuade the school to reverse its decision and continue to support competitive lacrosse," says Chris Winchester, Schools Liaison Officer, "not least as the Nationals organized by England Lacrosse are only open to students competing on behalf of their school. We hope the school will change its mind and allow its students to compete for St Bart's, as we hope they are impressed by the support we have received from the students, the sport and the local community."

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About Phoenix Lacrosse

- St Bartholomew's School, Newbury, is one of the few state schools in the country to offer lacrosse. It has a long track record of success, competing against other schools and in competitions including the Nationals. Several students are on the Lacrosse England Talent Pathway, and some have gone on to compete nationally and internationally. Several now teach lacrosse at other schools.
- Following the school's decision to discontinue competitive lacrosse, a group of parents and current and past students persuaded it to continue competitive lacrosse during a two-year transition period, entering the Senior team for the Nationals and arranging matches against other schools during this period. A petition to reverse the school's decision attracted over 800 signatures (<https://www.change.org/p/st-bartholomew-s-school-st-bartholomew-s-cancellation-of-lacrosse-fixtures-for-the-foreseeable-future>). However, the school's position is that students will not be allowed to compete on behalf of the school after this transition period, and so we have proceeded with setting up our own club.
- The Phoenix Lacrosse Club was born at the end of 2021. Our first practice took place in January 2022 and, since then, we have attracted 53 members, competed in the Marlborough College Invitational Tournament, in the South West Schools' Lacrosse Rally at Sherborne School and against Rendcomb College and St Mary's Calne. It also has outstanding invitations to play at Stowe School, Claremont School, and St Helen's and St Katharine's School in Abingdon.
- The Lacrosse Foundation is a charitable trust that exists to help fund the development of all forms of lacrosse in Great Britain – and is independent of the National Governing Bodies of England, Scotland & Wales. As a registered charity, their aim is to promote community participation, assist in the provision of facilities, and advance the education of young people in the sport of lacrosse. Their vision is for a sport which is accessible to all and played in every corner of Great Britain. To help achieve that, they offer various levels of grants (from small grants below £1000, to major grants in excess of £5,000) to fund activities and projects that develop the game of lacrosse.
- Lacrosse will become an Olympic sport for the first time at the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028. We believe that Olympic sports should be inclusive and open to all, whatever type of school they attend. To broaden inclusion in lacrosse further, Phoenix Lacrosse aims to conduct outreach to local primary and secondary schools.

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