

## CHAIR REPORT GREAT WHITTINGTON VILLAGE HALL 2022/2023

I thank you for attending this years AGM for the Village Hall reporting on what we, as a committee, believe has been a most successful year which has culminated in securing the long term sustainable future of the hall by the installation of a heat pump system powered by a solar array and battery back up. As this project is probably the most important thing which has happened to the hall since it was converted from the closed primary school fifty years ago I will start by reporting on its progress over the last two years.

The initial idea was formulated in April 2021 when we were informed that the National Lottery Community Fund had allocated £500000 to the North East and Cumbria with a maximum of £30000 to any project to improve the infrastructure of community buildings. We had two months to formulate an outline plan and with budget costs to present to a panel. We decided that heating the hall had been a major problem since it opened as keeping an old stone building warm in winter whilst it was only used intermittently was almost impossible. The only solution we saw was a heat pump supported by solar PV panels. This was all before the recent dramatic increase in energy costs. We were assisted in this by an energy survey funded by CAN and managed to make a presentation which was well received in June. We had to commit to providing up to £10000 from our own sources towards it.

We were informed in September that we had passed the first hurdle and then had to prepare a costed plan supported by three quotations by mid November. We managed to complete this task with a day to spare at a quoted total price of £71096 from three suppliers Scott's of Whittington for the car park work, J P Westall for the heat pump system and H E Electrical for the solar panels and batteries. This sum included nothing for inflation or contingencies. We were unofficially told that we might have succeeded in February but the official approval did not come through until June after the whole committee had been interviewed by representatives of the Lottery. This enabled us to look to other sources of funds and apply for planning permission.

We made applications for funding to eight charitable entities and were awarded a further total of £41000 from

Green Rigg Wind Fund £9000

Ray Wind Fund £5000

Willan Trust £10000

Rothley Trust £1000

John Bell Trust £1000

Community Hub Infrastructure Fund £10000

NCC Community Chest £5000

This together with £500 from the Parish Council and the up to £10000 from our own funds made a total of up to £83000 available.

We thank all these organisations for their generous support without which we would have been unable to contemplate this project.

We made a preplanning application and we were informed that full planning was required for the solar array and as this was so important to the project we decided to employ a planning consultant which was a very good decision as the decision date of 30th August slipped as questions were raised and final approval was not given until 5th December fifteen months since we asked for quotations. We are extremely grateful to Scott's and Westalls who agreed to stand by their original quotations and HE who only increased theirs by the panel and battery price rises they had suffered.

Only at this stage could we place orders for the work to commence on the panels and heat pump although the car park was completed in October as this did not need planning permission. The heat pump was installed in December and the panels in the week before the hall year end. They are working well. The batteries were still subject to supply chain delays at the year end and still are although we hope to have them in the next couple of weeks. The protective barriers to the panels were installed last week.

After the installation of the heat pump our electricity costs reduced despite keeping the hall at a warm base temperature but the cost for the year still increased to £1652 in the year at a contract price of 29.6 pence per kWh and at the end of this contract in February 2024 would probably increase again to in the region of £2500 but that is purely an estimate.

We believe that the panels will produce about 10000 Kwh per year with us producing more than we use for eight months, about even for two months and only needing to purchase about 1000

KWh then and using about 3000 KWh of our own production leaving in excess of 5000 KWh surplus.

We are actively looking into installing an EV charging point to utilise this surplus and this project should guarantee the sustainability of the hall for the foreseeable future.

## THE NORMAL REPORT

Although this report is called the chairs report it has been approved by the whole committee and I wish to thank them all for the time and effort they put into the running of the hall but especially Michele in what has been a very traumatic year. I also wish to thank Kaz, Jane and Chris for looking after the gardens and Henry for conducting the independent financial examination and all those who have helped making cakes for our very successful coffee mornings plus all the people who have helped setting up and removing tables and chairs for events.

We are a small committee of seven people all committed to the hall. Like many other hall committees especially in rural areas we now find a reduced number of people willing help run halls. This is thought to be as a result of more people not having been born and lived all their lives working in villages but all the existing committee are willing to stand again and we would welcome anyone else who would like to stand and share the load. We would be specifically grateful if someone who is more au fait with modern IT systems would volunteer to take this on.

I will make this report in the same five sections as last year. Events and Activities, Hall Hire, Committee Activities, Other Projects and Finance.

## EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

We have not held as many events this year as last. This was a decision made early on after The Queens Head reopened not to compete with them ceasing our popular Friday Nights when we produced a simple meal. We continued once a month when Frosts came with Fish and Chips but the other Fridays when we produced our own food ceased. We will continue to try not to compete with the pub. Despite this reduction in events we still held 32 events in the year. Unfortunately two planned events in the lead up to Christmas had to be cancelled, the Christmas table decoration seminar due to circumstances beyond our control and the Highlights performance of Sleeping Beauty which was cancelled by the theatre group. The main social events were the Queens Jubilee tea party, the BBQ and the Christmas Fair. We also held three highlights productions, Rob Heron and Tom Cronin, Miss Lindsay's Secret and Beneath the Banner which were very well received. We believe Highlights is a very important cultural type event, just the type of thing village halls should be promoting. Although we made ticket sales of £825 they are quite expensive to put on costing £821. We do however make money on bar sales. The Coffee Morning held on the first Saturday of every month has become more and more successful as time goes on with income from the coffee mornings totalling £1489. The events we held produced an excess of income over expenditure of £2358. This is an increase of £724 over last year

## HALL HIRE

The usage of the hall over the year has been underpinned by regular Pilates, Yoga and Dance Wave bookings. Unfortunately the daytime Yoga session has not been sufficiently supported to continue but Pilates and Dance Wave are going from strength to strength. We give these regular bookings a reduced rate of hire to encourage the hall usage. It has also been used for 20 private and commercial bookings some of which have come from the website and because we have an AV system and possibly as we now have an efficient heating system. Hall rental income was £1792 an increase of 90% over the previous year.

Hirings have started well this year and we are very hopeful that with the improved heating it will increase again.

## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Behind the scenes actions by the committee continued but not at the same pace as last year when we were all new to running the hall and we got to grips with the legal requirements of it plus the problems of reopening the hall following covid closedown.

The running of the website Facebook and email list continues to take considerable time and we have again been congratulated by CAN for being the most active website on their portal of over fifty halls.

As part of the Jubilee celebrations we planted a tree in the garden, a Fugus Sylvatica Dawwyck, which seems to be thriving and like all newly planted trees needed much watering and looking after.

Health and Safety checks have to be completed on a weekly basis.

Cleaning of the hall continues to be done by committee members as do many minor maintenance items.

Committee members have been involved in training for the heritage project at the county archives and have also attended meetings held by WNCBC.

All this on top of the work on projects, organising events, making cakes and fulfilling their specific roles on the committee.

## OTHER PROJECTS

The AV System.

This project was completed when BT eventually got around to putting a new pole opposite the hall enabling us to be connected to the internet which is essential for its operation. The cost of finalising this was £1697. Use of the system has been limited in the first year but it has enabled some extra commercial bookings. We hope to make more use of it in future years.

Emergency Warm Hub.

Following Storm Arwen we actively looked into how the village hall could support the parish in the event of similar problems. We obtained £4000 from Northern Powergrid which has funded bottled gas heaters and hobs plus generators to supply electricity if the panels do not produce sufficient. It will also pay for the internet and tv license for a couple of years.

What we still need is volunteers to help in the event that the emergency warm hub is required.

All three of these projects are interlinked. The AV system provides the internet and entertainment. The panels provide the base electricity to power the AV system plus allows mobile phone charging and the funding provides what is necessary to pull it all together.

Heritage Project.

We were one of the first fifteen halls to be included in the Northumberland Village Halls Project, we received advice and support from CAN and Northumberland Archives. We have received a small grant, £350. to conserve hall documents, photographs and artefacts. The project will be completed next year with a small publication and possibly a 2024 calendar. We would welcome input from anyone who may have memories or tales they are willing to share.

As I said at the start of this report a successful year and we believe the final thing we need to do is to have the hall treated for woodworm and then have it redecorated. We have placed the order for the woodworm treatment which will be completed tomorrow and hope to arrange painting shortly.

## FINANCE

The Accounts have been prepared by our treasurer, Emma, and independently inspected and approved by Henry Brown.

Grant Income

The major income in the year has been from grants which have all been received for designated purposes and has been spent or is ring fenced for them. In addition to the £73000 and £4000 already reported we received £500 from NCC to support the Jubilee, £350 from the National Lottery via CAN to part fund the heritage project and £536 from the PC towards a coronation bench. Total grants were therefore £78386.

#### Normal Income

#### Donations

These have also increased helped by people being generous especially at the Jubilee Party and by £100 from Ray Wind Fund donated for being their best grant application of the year plus £50 from our garden fruit put on a stall. Total donations were £914 which included £108 from Easyfundraising. I again request that any of our supporters who are not signed up do so. It's easy, costs you nothing and we get something. Anyone wishing to sign up can speak to any committee member

#### Hall Hire.

As previously reported £1792

#### Interest.

As we had a considerable sum sitting on deposit whilst we waited for planning permission we obtained £122 interest.

#### Miscellaneous

Other miscellaneous income of £413. This relates to two receipts concerning electricity, £263 refund of previous years wrongly charged standing charge and £150 government electricity subsidy.

So total income for the year excluding grants was £7816

#### Expenditure.

##### Grant and Project Expenditure

Total expenditure allocated to grant income was £57373, made up of £53264 solar project, £2202 emergency hub, and £1697 finalising the AV project from last year.

#### Normal Expenditure

#### Events.

cost £2202. Mainly food and bar supplies.

#### Household and Admin

This cost of £535 includes all cleaning, administrative and Covid costs

#### Licences and Subscriptions.

This £789 includes tv licence, bt internet, alcohol licence, music licence plus CAN and WNCBC subscriptions.

#### Insurance.

Our insurance is another one of our major expenses and it was £688

#### Maintenance.

Less this year than last which included items needing to be done following the covid closedown and was £21 with many minor items being completed by committee members at no cost to the hall. Next year it will be considerably more including woodworm treatment and flat roof repairs before we think about painting.

#### Electricity.

This year £1652 hopefully the most we will ever pay and it includes a £263 credit for three years incorrect standing charge up to February 2022 and £150 government subsidy both of which are included as miscellaneous income to give a true electricity cost.

Water £255

This shows a total surplus of income over expenditure of £63188 but more importantly the normal income surplus was £1991 and we ended the year with a healthy bank balance of £47000 of which £32210 is ring fenced for projects. This balance means it has been impossible to obtain a grant for the woodworm treatment and also not for repainting.

That concludes the report for the year. It along with the accounts and the approved copy of last years AGM minutes will be posted on our website in the next couple of days and I now open the meeting to the floor for any questions