

GREAT BEDWYN VILLAGE HALL

Business Plan for funding proposal.

History

The Bedwyn Memorial Hall and Playing Fields Charity, own the Bedwyn Village Hall, most of the field alongside where the cricket club operates, as well as the recreation ground which includes the Tennis club and the former bowls club. The current Village Hall building was completed in 1984. Since when no significant improvements have been made to the building.

In 2012 the Village lost the British Legion, and in 2016 we lost the Cross Keys Pub, the two venues offered function rooms, leaving just the Village Hall as the only community facility.

The population of Great Bedwyn in 1981 when the hall was built was 974. The population in 2021 was 1353, an increase of 38.9%. Assuming the same growth, the population in 2061 will be 1878.

Until 2019, the primary source of income at the hall was the Playgroup, later known as Pre-School. This occupied the building every school day, which inevitably precluded any other community use, other than some evenings and weekends. It did however, provide financial stability for the Village Hall, the accounts were healthy. Sadly, the Pre School folded in December 2019, following a steady decline in numbers. This was despite the Village Hall Committee (VHC), halving their fees to help them survive towards the end. There are other examples of VHC agreeing to reduce fees as a temporary respite to help various activities to survive.

The Current Situation

The Village Hall was now faced with a whole new concept, it had to attract new business. However, early 2020 was the start of the Covid crisis which changed everything. Despite this, in the various remissions, we did start to attract new business during the day with various exercise classes and events in the daytime and evenings. Now that the Covid situation appears to have stabilised, the hall is in use every day of the week, though some of the activities cease during school holidays. We have now achieved a satisfactory level of bookings. This has been with very little promotion of the facility.

The main aim of the VHC is to provide a community facility for all ages and needs. It is most unfortunate that, until Covid struck, we had a thriving Beavers and Cubs group that met every Monday evening, and Youth Group that met every Tuesday evening. Sadly, these have now both folded. There is, however, every chance that they will reform, and the VHC have pledged that provision will be made for them at any time should they return.

On Wednesday afternoons, the Mobility and Fitness group meets, providing a valuable health and social facility for up to 30 of the senior members of the community. On Monday the 'Stay and Play' provide a valuable space for toddlers and parents to meet, currently helping up to 15 families each week. On Fridays there is Talltales, which is a Theatre experience group for youngsters.

Other regular users of the Hall facilities include the Pantomime Society, History Society, Women's Institute, Bedwyn Cinema, Friday Quiz night, and Parish Council.

Feedback has indicated that while groups are happy to use the main hall, it is quite large and imposing for a smaller meeting.

We have reached this current level of use with little promotion or advertising. It is difficult to say when maximum capacity is achieved, but increasingly now we find that an enquiry for a new booking has to be turned away because it overlaps another. The situation is such that we have now had to employ an administrator for 8 hours per month to manage the bookings and administration.

We have definitely reached the point where we are held back by the size of the facility.

There has been recent speculation that the Church may in the future become in the future be in a position to offer some community facility. The VHC have been in conversation with the Friends of St Marys Church and we agree that while there may be new ideas for how the Church may be used, this will complement, and not compete with the Village hall.

There was an idea at one time to consider a joint expansion venture with the Cricket Club. This was discussed, but they felt that while this may be possible one day, this is not the right time for them.

Bedwyn British Legion

In 2017, the building which was the Bedwyn British Legion club in the High Street, was sold for development by the National body of Royal British Legion. It subsequently transpired that an adjoining strip of land was separate from that sale, and was owned by the Bedwyn Legion club, such that it did not form part of that sale. It was sold separately by the Bedwyn and District British Legion club, who kindly donated the £45000 to the Village Hall, on the strict condition that this legacy was to be used to fund a new function room at the Village Hall, and that this would form a tribute to the former Bedwyn Legion, and all that it had done for the community over the last 80 years and more.

The Proposal

Phase 1 of the project is for a second function room, which will be known as The Legion Room. Since the news of the legacy, the VHC have considered various options, and have decided on a plan, which is attached to this document. This is for an adjoining room, with independent access. The existing hall is 14 metres x 9 metres, with a stage and back stage area at one end, and a kitchen at the other. The proposed room would be approximately third of that at 9 metres x 5 metres. It would be suitable for meetings of up to 30 people.

We are holding an open meeting on 24th November when we will present these proposals to the community and seek their views, both on this project and other ideas under consideration, including a Bridge Club and Table tennis..

Benefits

1. The size, and with a low ceiling make it more intimate and appropriate for smaller meetings.
2. It is totally separate from the main hall, giving privacy. It has direct access to entrance lobby and toilets.
3. It could extend the capability of the main hall, by opening the adjoining doors and joining the two rooms together for large events.
4. It creates the flexibility that allows overlapping of bookings.
5. The newly installed Air source heating system has the capacity to heat the new room.
6. The size, and its privacy make it ideal for rental as occasional office/meeting space. There is wifi in the building, the room will have facilities for making hot drinks..
7. It provides separated access to the back stage area of the main hall, giving them access to the toilets, where previously there was none.
8. It fills in the 'L' shape of the existing building, so two of the four walls are already present.

9. It will increase the income for the Village Hall with minimal increase in running costs, (only power consumption)
10. Increased profit will be reflected in reduced hire charges for local community.
11. The proposal includes some additional, and much needed storage facilities.
12. The construction would have little or no impact on the normal activities in the main hall.

Fuel efficiency

In 2020, we installed a new Air Source Heat System in the hall. With grateful thanks to Parish Council, Bedwyn Cinema and Bedwyn Pantomime Society. At that time, we anticipated that an extension may be feasible, so the Heat Pump is of sufficient capacity that it will heat the new room. We qualified for a 'Residual Heat Initiative Grant' from Ofgem, which is payable for 25 years..

Projected Costs

There are two phases to this project, the primary project is the function room as described. secondly to refurbish the existing kitchen and bar area, and replacement windows.

Phase One - The New Function Room

I am in discussion with two builders. Despite the difficulties of predicting future costs, I have obtained some estimated figures, assuming construction next year..

Architects fees and planning..	£4250	
Groundwork and building.	£84000	
Electrical	<u>£4000</u>	
	£92250	
Contingency fund 10%	<u>£9225</u>	
	<hr/>	£101475
VAT		<u>£20295</u>
	TOTAL	<u>£121770</u>

Phase Two - The Kitchen Refurbishment and replacement windows.

Replacement 'commercial' grade kitchen, incl. extraction and	£16280 incl. vat.
Replacement windows in main hall	£4600 incl. vat.
	TOTAL
	<u>£20880</u>

OVERALL TOTAL COST **£142650**

While we believe that Phase 2 is much needed, it will be secondary to the new function room, and will only be considered as and when sufficient funds are available.

Village Hall Finances

<u>Year 2018 -19.</u>	Income	£22712	
	Expenditure	£20488	
	Margin		£2226

<u>Year 2019 - 20</u>	Income	£11560	
	Expenditure	£10497	
	Margin		£1063

* This included the period where we halved the charges on Pre School as a rescue attempt.

<u>Year 2020 - 21</u>	Income	£34323	
	Expenditure	£24439	
	Margin		£9884

* This included a Covid grant and donations of £32130, and expenditure of £14664 on the new heat system.

<u>Year 2021 - 22</u>	Income	£19776	
	Expenditure	£9827	
	Margin		£9945

* This included a Covid grant of £11915, so showed a trading deficit of £1970. However, this period included the slow recovery period coming out of lockdown.

Cash in Bank October 2022

Current Account	£28088	
Deposit Account	£65956	
Total		£97684

Request for Funding from Parish Council

As you will see, we have considerable cash in the bank. This does include the legacy from British Legion, and some residue from Covid grants. We are planning to use up to £65000 of our funds, but we do need to keep a considerable reserve contingency, for amount other things, the Memorial Trees in the recreation ground which may require considerable investment over the next few years.

The sum that we are seeking from the CIL fund through Parish Council is £45000, to match the Legion legacy. Clearly there is more to be raised , but we are confident that this can be raised from other sources, and already working on other applications, including to the Lottery Community Fund and Area Board, and Tesco's Community project.

The reason we are seeking the CIL money first is that, should we be successful, together with our own funds, we are confident that we would be in a position to apply immediately for planning permission for Phase 1, and proceed as soon as permission is received. This doesn't mean that the Phase 2 isn't important, we know from customer feedback that the kitchen is in dire need of attention. However, the Legion legacy can only be used for the second function room.

Both builders that we have approached would be in a position to start work in the spring of 2023.

Rob Braybrooke
Chair of Trustees
Bedwyn Memorial Hall and Playing Fields Charity.