



# **Chairman's Report**

**Coxhoe Village Hall Association**

**April 2021**

# Chairman's Report – Coxhoe Village Hall, April 2021

## Introduction



I have had the pleasure of holding the position of Chair of the Village Hall since 2013. I am immensely proud of the achievements of the Management Committee during my tenure, which has again seen the Village Hall improve our offer to the community it serves.

2020 proved to be the most challenging year to date. The Worldwide Pandemic has adversely affected every one of us in some shape or form. From being locked down and unable to share time with our friends and family. Financial challenges, to the extreme of some of our community losing loved ones.

Our loyal and devoted staff were placed on Furlough, as we had to close the Village Hall. Our user groups have all been suspended.

Despite the gloom of the Pandemic we will be forever grateful to the Government whom via Durham County Council have supported us with various much needed grants.

We thank the Ladies Club and Tea Dance for their continued support and very kind donations, and along with utilising some of our modest reserves has ensured the Hall has covered its costs and saw us commence reopening with effect from 12<sup>th</sup> April for those who could return safely.

There now appears a real road map to normality, and we as a Management Committee look forward to welcoming everyone back to the Hall.

## Improvements

Despite the shadow of the Pandemic we have utilised this time to undertake some significant improvements along with some emergency repairs.

**Replacement Windows.** Following a successful funding application to East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership for £13,104.00 we are delighted that all the windows in the Village Hall have been replaced.

This allied to our previously installed energy efficiency measures which included Solar Panels, Cavity loft & Wall insulation, 'A' rated boiler, zoned heating controls. Will help reduce our carbon footprint and in doing so reduce our running costs year on year.

The work was secured following a competitive procurement process and expertly installed by McKenzie Building Contractors.

**Toilet Refurbishment** I think we all would agree the toilets in the Village Hall were in need of a refresh. We are delighted to confirm we have recently completed a £25,000 refurbishment.



To include a full disabled toilet. Baby change unit. New cubicles and urinals And just to confuse you the Ladies and Gents have swapped sides. !!! Careful how you go old habits die hard.

This project was only made possible with support from our County Councillors Stuart Dunn, Maura McKeon and Jan Blakey all of who donated £5000 each, as well as County Durham Community Foundation who also awarded us a grant of £5000 the balance was funded by the Village Hall

The work was undertaken by Durham Building Services Ltd, again following a competitive Tender process.

**Hall Floor** – Think of the Village Hall and we all think about the famous sprung dance floor. Imagine our horror to learn sections of it had started to suffer from rot.

We initiated urgent repairs which with the help and support of the Parish and our pre May 2021 County Councillors, we replaced the affected sub floor, sourced new flooring which was Canadian in origin and the floor is back fully operational.

We scarily got a quotation for the inevitable day the floor has to be replaced in its entirety; it would be in the order of £150,000 to £200,000. Let's hope we get many more years of usage out of the floor. The works were painstakingly undertaken by McKenzie Building Contractors

**Fire Alarm** We can now confirm that we have a fully automated fire alarm system fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A funding application was made and successful, to East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership for £ 6,000 This was supported by some invaluable voluntary management time provided by Wates Construction to assist with coordination.

A donation from the Coxhoe Branch of Sunderland Supporters Association was also gratefully received. £50.00.

The works were secured following a tender process and undertaken by Tees Fire Systems and completed the day before lockdown.

### **Upstairs Roof and ceiling**

In June we noticed our upstairs room ceiling was damaged. On investigation it was found that our roof was leaking and causing damage to the ceiling. East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership granted us funding through their Covid Emergency Fund which allowed us to repair the roof.

**New external lighting** We are delighted to have added lighting to the front of the Hall and upgraded the lighting in the car park to LED's again assisting in reducing our running costs.

**Upgraded and extended CCTV** We have added a further three cameras and upgraded the actual cameras to provide extra security and safety to the Village Hall.

**Lift Installation** Unfortunately we have an issue in that the manufacturer of the lift who is in receivership as an outcome of the pandemic. We are in need to a critical part which we have been unable to source. We therefore regret to advise the we will need to abandon this project and have the old lift removed.

## **Community Engagement during Lockdown**

During Lockdown we have not been resting on our laurels.



**Bags of Cheer** we secured funding, with help and support from East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership Covid Response Fund and put together a bag containing relevant information and an Afternoon Tea and these were delivered to over 300 homes in Coxhoe by our volunteers, in the hope it made them smile in these sad times.

**Bags of VJ Cheer and Covid Memories** We secured funding of £923.00 from Durham County Council Covid Assistance fund. This project hopes to capture your memories, your thoughts of the lockdown

In August 2020 we wanted to bring another smile and symbol of hope and cheeriness to the residents of Coxhoe and those from outlying villages who regularly used our services; to prepare and deliver a 'Bag of VJ Day Cheer', to support VJ Day Celebrations, offering an Afternoon Cuppa and Cake, along with a colourful pamphlet which included relevant information, puzzles and ways to maintain good wellbeing and keeping moving. We also included coloured pens, an easy grip pencil and paper and asked recipients to share their thoughts with us so we can create a collage with the feedback received and display it in the Village Hall as Coxhoe's memories of the Coronavirus pandemic for future generations to see (for which we also purchased a wall mounted lockable display board)

For more information visit our website

[www.coxhoevillagehall.com/2020/09/we-would-like-to-collate-your-coxhoe-covid-memories](http://www.coxhoevillagehall.com/2020/09/we-would-like-to-collate-your-coxhoe-covid-memories)

## **New activities introduced**

**Social Inclusion and people's Mental Health** a very real topic given social isolation, we are delighted to confirm we secured help and support from East Durham Rural Corridor AAP and Awards for All.

The new weekly sessions will include:

- An Afternoon Out' – a weekly get together to enjoy yourselves with a mix of quizzes, sing-alongs and interesting and informative talks
- "Family Fun and Fitness' – a fun activity session for all the family



- 'Revolving Doors' a men's only get together
- Games for a Laugh' a session to meet, have a catch up and have the opportunity to play various floor and board games
- A new Carpet Bowls Club Dates and times are still to be finalised so please watch out on our website, facebook page and our Village Hall noticeboards for details

## Old and New Partnerships



**The Community Pantry** – is a Partnership between Coxhoe Village Hall, Coxhoe Parish Council, Coxhoe Cares Volunteers, FareShare and The Co-op.

It has received funding from the East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership (AAP) and County Councillors Stuart Dunn and Maura McKeown.

The Village Hall and the Parish Council has dedicated staff time to the community pantry and the Village Hall has also provided a storeroom.

It is open to anyone who may be facing tough financial times at the moment, for whatever reason, and is able to distribute food that otherwise might go to waste.

For more information visit our website

[www.coxhoevillagehall.com/coxhoeandareacommunitypantry](http://www.coxhoevillagehall.com/coxhoeandareacommunitypantry)

### **The Food Bank**

The foodbank is an additional service ran in partnership with Durham Christian Partnership and runs alongside the Community Pantry on a Monday morning and food is accessible only via a voucher received from a referral agency.

**The Reading Room** – A much loved facility. It is with great sadness that Dorothy Smith one of our dedicated Reading Room Volunteers has passed away after a short illness. The thoughts of the community are with her family and friends. Pat Hudson has retired from the Reading Room a heartfelt thank you and we all hope Pat has a long, and healthy retirement.

We are looking for volunteers to continue the great work of the book room.

**The Co-operative Store** – Loyalty programme continues to provide much needed financial support the village hall recently received just over £2,000. So keep using your cards when shopping in the CO OP many thanks it all helps

**Amazon Smile** We are lucky enough to benefit from support from Amazon as the fulfilment centre is within a short distance of the Village Hall. By simply changing your app to Amazon smile and nominating your chosen charity as Coxhoe Village Hall, a percentage of your collective spend is paid to the Village Hall.

## Support from others

The Parish Council, in response to the Village Plan, continue to assist and support the running of the Village Hall with a £4,000 grant, for which we are extremely grateful.



In conjunction with Age Concern we continue the luncheon club which will provide lunch and company for approximately 20 people.

## Accounts

Karen has now supported the village hall for over two years and now delivers an effective service despite lock down.

We are pleased to advise that our accounts have been fully audited and along with the Chairman's Report will be submitted to the Charities Commission.

Thank you to David Nichol for again auditing our accounts which he does year on year free of charge.

We are pleased to confirm that this year we have for the fourth year, balanced our books and managed to build and sustain a reasonable level of reserve. This level of reserve is still below that recommended by the Charities commission for an organisation of our size, but represents a year on year improvement.

Current Balance is **£38,429.24p** of which **£20,428.07p** is committed leaving **£18,001.17p** in reserves.

## User Groups

We continue to be amazed at the numbers and diversity of people and activities using the village hall. The pandemic has adversely effected these and we look forward to welcoming them back in the near future.

We continue to host events such as Weddings, Birthday's, Funeral's, Dance shows etc.

## Committee

The current committee is relatively small but a hard-working bunch and I personally would like to thank you all for your support and commitment.

Nicola Dodsworth our secretary, who resigned from paid employment and now devotes countless hours, to what sometimes can feel like a thankless task. But does so, with a smile and a positive attitude.

## Staff

Derek Orton – Caretaker.

Shirley Armstrong – who has recently retired.

We thank the team for their contribution.

## **Volunteers**

Ian Forster continues to update and improve our website and social media, works with Karen to respond to online enquiries and offers support and help for the Village Hall and Community Pantry for which we thank him.

**Friends of the village hall** - Small in number, but we as a committee, appreciate the help they have provided.

## **Challenges for 2021 and beyond**



We have a large and increasing size of community and undoubtedly within the community there must be people with skills or just energy and time who could contribute something to improving the hall for the benefit of the community.

The current committee is too small and needs to be freshened up with people who are prepared to run with actions and get involved.

We must continue to submit funding applications to improve the hall.

In 2019 Nicola and I put the community on notice of our intent to stand down at the next AGM, because of the pandemic we felt the time was wrong and stability was crucial.

However, Nicola and I are delighted to advise we have bought a lovely home and will be moving away from Coxhoe, and whilst we are not moving far away we now need to become focused on our own challenge and building project for the next few years.

Therefore, we are confirming that we will not be standing for re-election.

Our commitment to the community of Coxhoe, is to work alongside the new committee to ensure a smooth transition. It is time for the Wider Community to get involved.

## **Partnership Working**

Karen Williams, our Village Hall Manager, deserves special recognition and appreciation. Despite the pandemic, being Furloughed. Karen has worked tirelessly to secure funding and look after the best interests of the village hall. She is a pleasure to work with and a joy to be around.

## **Conclusion**

We the committee, the staff and volunteers are proud to have delivered another positive annual report. We have made steady controlled progress despite the pandemic. Continued to focus on the future with various improvements.

We are immensely proud of the journey we have been on with the Village Hall over the last eight years, the improvements we as a team have made and the sure footing we leave the village hall on, for the new committee.

**Paul Dodsworth**

**Chairman Coxhoe Village Hall**