

Waterhouses Community Association

Trustees Annual Report 2020-21

Again, this Annual General Meeting is much later in the year than usual, due to the Covid 19 situation. It is lovely to see those of you who have come along to support us.

This past year we owe thanks not only to the Committee Members and the regular Volunteers, but to those who have helped us for the first time this year, be it painting the Hall, assisting us with the Covid Projects or other tasks.

Projects/Activities

The Orchard – In general, the orchard is progressing well. Since it was planted in 2017 a number of the trees have failed due to naturally occurring diseases and also vandalism. However, the remaining trees are growing well. In the growing season, the location of the trees means that competition from other wild plants could reduce the potential for maximum growth each year, but manual cutting back of the competing species is carried out once or twice a year. In general the trunks are putting on girth and are strong.

In terms of fruit production, this year is not expected to be very fruitful. This is due to adverse cold conditions in the early spring, which meant that the blossoms were frost-nipped and therefore did not go on to produce viable fruits. It should be said that this phenomenon is not restricted to the planted orchard trees: many fruit trees in the valley have not fruited this year. However, better is hoped for next year. Up to now, most fruit has been removed from the trees to maintain their vigorous growth but the trees are now large enough to be able to support some fruit through to ripeness, where it can be freely picked where encountered by anyone who would like to.

A quick note about the apple tree situated next to the seat that was set on fire towards Esh Winning: although the tree was affected by the intense heat, it is nevertheless recovering well. Pruning during the winter will be done to try and help the tree regain its best shape.

The first Project of the year was to ensure the Hall was Covid Safe. Many regulations had to be followed, resulting in many signs going up around the Hall, a one-way system being installed and a Fogging Machine being purchased. We were inspected by the Council and found to be compliant. Thanks to Vicky Beasley, our Chair, who spent many hours ensuring we met the requirements.

Lunch Club Grant - We had a balance of £1529.64 at the end of last year after donating to The Allotment School. It was decided very early in the year to use this money to help schools in the area that were endeavouring to feed families hardest hit by the Pandemic. £1000 was donated to Esh Winning School and £529.64 to Stanley Crook Primary School. Both were extremely grateful for the contributions. The

Allotment is still holding the £900 donated, as it has been unable to organise any activities but plans to organise some in the summer.

It became very apparent that the roof needed attention as there was some water ingress in the corner of the main Hall. The repairs were carried out in July. Other maintenance issues were the statutory 5-year building electrics inspection, update of the circuit breakers on the night storage heaters, fridge freezer replacement, refurbishment of the 3 garden seats which are to be placed on the Line and Hedley Hill Terrace, the Little Library replacement, main Hall floor refurbishment, and chair cleaning. These projects were not without their problems, mainly the floor refurb – we only paid for hire of equipment and supplies as we were not happy with the finish. The floor has been completed this year by a different company.

We have been having ongoing problems with our electricity supply. In October we found the night storage heaters were not working and had prolonged dealings with the supplier as to what the problem was. Eventually it was identified as a faulty meter. Apparently, there was no replacement meter available and ours could not be repaired as the only person able to do that was on furlough. A temporary meter was installed and despite many conversations and chases, is still there. The temporary meter has not been registered to us on our Suppliers system, which has meant no meter readings can be supplied. We continue to pay monthly what we believe to be a reasonable amount and look forward to this being sorted shortly.

Covid Projects.

We provided several activities to our local community during the year. In December we sent out Christmas Activity Bags for the children and made up over 74 Christmas Tea Boxes for our Seniors. We also arranged for the Ran Tanners to sing carols around the Village.

Early in the year Pizza Bags were given out to around 60 children, then at Easter we distributed 84 Senior's Easter Teas, 74 Kids Activity Bags and held Competitions for Best Decorated Eggs and Bonnets. We were also given some AAP funded Activity Baskets to distribute to Seniors.

These activities could not have been carried out without the generous support of the volunteers and we give them our thanks.

Future Projects

The sale of the land at the rear of the Hall will be completed by June – any ideas for projects using this capital will be considered.

The Hall requires further maintenance, including further roof repairs, repairing water damaged walls and re-laying of some of the paving slabs at the front of the Hall as these have become a trip hazard.

Hall Activities

Obviously, the Hall was unable to carry out the usual regular activities all year, excepting for a very few weeks in the Autumn. We were able to have a Well Being Drop In most Wednesday mornings, where we supplied free refreshments and company for a couple of hours.

Fund Raising

No fundraising was able to take place this year, although 2 AAP Grants for Covid Activities were obtained by Vicky Beasley.

If you feel you can help or have any ideas how we can improve life in our Village, please come along to a Committee Meeting, or talk to one of the Committee Members. Also, regular volunteers are very hard to come by and we would love to have more.

Financial

A copy of the audited Profit and Loss Report from the Treasurer is available. The full Accounts are available for anyone who wishes to look at them. The hi-lights are as follows:

Opening Balance of £22k and closing balance of £29k.

The main costs this year has been the repayment of electricity owed (due to lack of meter readings), and maintenance costs. The roof repair was £3500, the floor £800, Covid compliance cost were around £550.

The Social Club donated £3000, the local Parish Councillor again gave us £100 at Christmas time from her budge (thanks go to Mrs. Wharton), and the solar panels income was £964.

It has been an unusual year, but I think we have weathered it well, thanks to the enthusiasm of the volunteers and financial help from the Durham County Council. Hopefully next year will see our regular activities resume.