

# **Topcliffe & Asenby Village Hall**

**AGM – 7th May 2024**

## **Chairman's Report for period May 2023 to April 2024**

As an ongoing charity run for the benefit of the residents of Topcliffe and Asenby, the Village Hall continues to provide a comfortable and social venue for numerous activities for all age groups within our community.

The committee has long maintained a policy of ensuring that the day to day running costs of the hall are generally covered by the income from hire charges. Fortunately, the number of both regular and occasional users of the Village Hall has been consistent throughout this reporting period. This has ensured the important balance of income against expenditure, with routine costs of utilities and services covered by hire charges. However, the recent significant rises in the cost of electricity and gas look set to remain for the foreseeable future and, taken together with consistent inflation of costs across the board, could lead to a narrower margin of income vs expenditure, meaning our hire charges must be regularly reviewed.

Expenditure on the upkeep of the fabric of the hall and any improvements rely heavily on funds raised at events organised by committee members and on occasional donations from individuals and groups who support the Village Hall.

The importance of maintaining a healthy bank balance, on top of the agreed contingency fund, cannot be underestimated: I foresee some significant costs for redecoration and routine maintenance in the foreseeable future.

In early January 2023, the Treasurer reported an unexpectedly high water bill over twenty times more than the usual quarterly charge. Once a potential faulty water meter reading had been ruled out, it became obvious that there was a significant water leak within the Village Hall boundary. The leak was eventually confirmed and remedial works were contracted out, necessitating the closure of the hall for approximately six weeks. This led to an associated and immediate loss of revenue from existing bookings (including refunds), but also had the potential for loss of revenue from longer-term bookings, first from the ongoing disruption but secondly for the longer-term outlook from hirers finding alternative venues for their activities. Fortunately, after this period of disruption all of the regular hirers returned to use the hall and the regularity of the single hire use of the hall has not been affected.

The Village Hall's finances suffered a significant temporary loss due to the cost of repairs for the water leak, and thanks must go to our Treasurer, Tony Bruce, for the significant time and effort he spent with the water companies and insurance company to facilitate a significant reimbursement for our financial loss. As a result, the latest financial report shows the hall's financial situation as healthy with a positive balance of around £20k, although the exact sum can only be confirmed when the outcome of the water company claim has been determined.

I would also like to thank Malcolm Morley and Doug Allan for their time and effort spent dealing with the leak and in particular with contractors. The contribution of these three committee members cannot be underestimated and I am sure the committee will join with me in extending its gratitude and thanks for the work involved.

The water leak incident confirmed the value of maintaining a significant contingency budget within the hall's overall budget. Fortunately, we have recovered much of the cost of the repair work through insurance and we hope to get reimbursement of water charges from the water supply company. Clearly, if the contingency fund and additional reserves had not been available the Village Hall Committee would have found itself responsible for a significant shortfall for the cost of repairs. For that reason, I fully support the Treasurer's recommendation to increase the contingency budget to £15,000 for the period 2024-2025.

At present the building and interior of the hall are in a good state of repair, however, problems with high condensation levels in the kitchen may need addressing soon to alleviate any potential damage in that area. Similarly, increased condensation levels in the main hall may need addressing. The emergency lighting system in the main hall has been replaced with a modern compliant system and the smoke detectors in all areas have been replaced.

The patio area to the side of the hall had a significant re-work during the summer of 2023 with the paving slabs and pathway being levelled and re-laid, and an extended grass area prepared. Unfortunately, much of the grassed area was disturbed to allow the water leak repairs to be undertaken but yet again committee members stepped in to make good the damaged areas. Hopefully by the summer the grass will be in a fit state for use for hirers should they want to make use of the outside areas.

The Hallmaster booking system has been running very successfully for several years as the platform for both bookings and payments. The committee recognises and thanks Nicky Wood, who has now resigned from the committee, for all her time and work spent introducing the system and keeping it active, updated and fit for purpose. Helen Fothergill's arrival on the committee and her appointment as Bookings Administrator will be extremely advantageous for the future maintenance and development of the system.

Village Hall Committee members continue to organise and run varied and well supported activities for the benefit of our communities, as well as to raise funds to support the Village Hall itself. It is hoped that new members to the committee will bring a renewed enthusiasm and energy to the committee's activities and administration.

Overall, it is a positive reporting period: the number of both regular and occasional hirers is consistent and viable for the continued successful operation of the hall. The building and grounds of the hall are in a good state of repair, finances are healthy and the hall remains a popular venue for residents of our two villages and users from further afield.

At this AGM am I am standing down as Chairman and resigning from the Village Hall Committee. The past 14 years as chairman have been a rewarding experience and I have enjoyed working alongside an enthusiastic, capable, hard-working and dedicated team of volunteers. There have been some significant events during my time on the committee and I am proud that during my time in office the committee has made some tremendous improvements to both the structure and administration of our hall. I wish the committee all success for the future.

Andrew Eckersley  
Chairman  
Topcliffe & Asenby Village Hall Committee