

**Buxted Community Hall Trust 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting held at  
The Reading Room, Buxted on  
Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 commencing at 7-30pm**

**Trustees present: Nick Tricker, (Chair), Pauline Bonner, Maggie Dopson, Eileen Claydon, George Claydon (Treasurer). Apologies received from Sheila Bartholomew. 21 members of the public were present - including Vivienne Blandford (Chairman of the Parish Council).**

**Item 1. Introduction, apologies and welcome. (Chairman).** Nick Tricker welcomed all those present who had turned out on another very wet evening. He particularly mentioned Vivienne Blandford, Chairman of the Parish Council who had agreed to assist him with presenting Item 6 on the agenda. He introduced the five BCHT trustees present and reported apologies from Sheila Bartholomew.

**Items 2 & 3. Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and Matters Arising (Chairman)** Minutes of the previous AGM had been widely published and copies were available in the room. These minutes had no matters arising and could either be read to the meeting or be taken as read. This latter course of action was adopted without exception.

**Item 4 Report on Second Year of Operation, Background to the scheme and progress up to last year's AGM (Chairman)** When I joined the Trust in the spring of 2011 our architect was being employed by the Parish Council to develop plans for the new hall on behalf of HOBI (Heart of Buxted Initiative), with the view of submitting a planning application to Wealden District Council. In August 2011 the Parish Council submitted a planning application for a new hall and ancillary accommodation. The scheme at that time was quite elaborate, incorporating a nursery school, and I'm doubtful that it could ever have been afforded. The Trust always anticipated having to prune the scheme once we had planning permission; we felt it unlikely that WDC would object to a smaller scheme once they had given the full scheme planning approval. Unfortunately Wealden took a long time to respond to the application. Early in March 2012 a new EU Directive came into effect. This immediately affected WDC's planning policy and the Parish Council was asked to withdraw the application. The EU Directive meant there could be no developments within 7km of Ashdown Forest. WDC officers told us they wanted to help us achieve our aims and began to talk about possible ways of going forward, but keeping within the Directive. In early summer 2012 we joined the PC chairman for meetings with WDC officers and members. These proved to be positive affairs. They considered how, given the 7km exclusion zone, a new hall could be built that meets Buxted's needs, without increasing traffic movements in the area, and therefore nitrogen levels. A replacement for the Reading Room on the Ionides site is possible. We were told that it would need to be kept at roughly the same size as the Reading Room so as not to attract more car journeys in the area; there could be only a few car parking spaces to replace those at the RR site in Church Rd- it was thought that the new Surgery and Railway station car parks could be utilised in the evenings by people using the new facility. In terms of raising money for the project, the Trust put fund-raising activity on hold, feeling that villagers needed to see that an acceptable solution was actually achievable, before being asked to contribute towards building a new hall. Just over a year ago the architect was asked to obtain from WDC the amount of Permitted Development that is available to extend the Reading Room. Permitted development does not need Planning Permission. I reported to last year's AGM that we were hopeful it can be argued that the allowed area for the new community hall should be equal to the actual area of the Reading Room now plus any permitted development which would be allowed by WDC if we were to seek to enlarge it before replacing it. The Parish Council and the architect have therefore worked closely with WDC in seeking to maximise the size of a new hall within the new planning constraints. At the last AGM I anticipated that this line of thinking could well provide a hall that is acceptable to the people of Buxted, affordable, and approvable by WDC. I also reported to those attending that I hoped that a new planning application could be submitted to WDC within a couple of months, or so. Unfortunately, progress has been slower than expected.

Since the last AGM the Parish Council has appointed our architect to liaise with Wealden Planners, and to develop a new scheme through to planning that is acceptable to WDC and suitable for Buxted. The Chairman of the Parish Council has taken the lead in seeing this process through, acting as client for the architect. In the past year there have been a number of meetings between the Parish Council and Wealden Planners to agree on the size and design of the new Community Hall to be built on the Ionides site. These meetings have established the basis for a scheme which fits in with Wealden's interpretation of the March 2011 Planning Directive.

In August I accompanied the chairman of the Parish Council and architect to see the new village hall in Barcombe. Sheila and I also spent a morning setting out markers showing how the hall would sit on the site available. This enabled us to get a feel for how the final plans might affect neighbouring properties and other site users, in particular the position of the building with respect to the children's playground. We also discussed how the shape of the hall might affect the sound quality within it. The architect made a number of changes to his drawings as a result of these activities. Following discussion with WDC planners the PC has recently completed a Travel Plan, which will form part of the planning application. This document sets out the argument in support of the new facility, including how the scheme might reduce car journeys in the village! This evening we have plans and a model available for you to see the design of proposed Community Hall and how it fits into the Ionides land. The Trust's future role is to assist the Parish Council in obtaining planning permission for a new Community Hall on the Ionides site. Our particular role includes offering our opinion on the design, size and contents of the building to the Parish Council on behalf of the village. We shall continue to be part of the process of discussion with WDC and the architect, offering judgements on the value of what is proposed and whether it meets the needs of the village, and is cost effective. Raising the funding needed for the project is a role that should not be underestimated. In taking it on, the Trust needs to be assured that the completed project will provide significant additional benefits to the community in comparison to continuing to use the out-dated Reading Room. Once planning permission is realised, hopefully in the next few months, the Trust will take over the project from the Parish Council, plan a programme of fund raising, and progress the detailed design process with our architect and other construction professionals. To deliver a completed building we are going to need real practical support from the village. The Trust, as it is at present, simply cannot deliver such a major challenge. We shall need more volunteers to be actively involved in fund raising, in giving expertise, time and money. Especially we need help from younger people with families who will benefit from the new hall in the future.

To sum up the Trust is looking for a project that meets the four As'. It must be:

**Acceptable** to all locally with its facilities, design and position etc,

**Affordable** with reasonable prospects of achieving the requisite building costs,

**Approvable** by WDC under the various planning regulations and constraints, and

**Achievable** with committed support from local persons giving their expertise and time, as well as money.

**5 Presentation of Accounts. (Treasurer)** Copies of our 'examined' Income & Expenditure accounts balance sheet for the Buxted Community Hall Trust's financial year ending 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013 are available around the room. At the beginning of the year it had become apparent to the trustees that the process of the Parish Council obtaining planning consent for the new hall was not going to be simple or quick. Accordingly, a decision was taken not to actively pursue a programme of fundraising until this matter was resolved. We were committed to supporting the Jubilee event on the Ionides Trust land on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2012 and the majority of our income in the year came from sources arising from that event. The expenditure over the year mostly relates to administrative and publicity items connected with running the charitable company or fees for membership of the Action in Rural Sussex advisory group. During the year the Trust made a profit of £241.54 and had a total of £5,739.38 to carry forwards. The trustees are most grateful to Councillor Michelle Warner (FCCA) for her invaluable voluntary work in again conducting the audit of our accounts and for submitting the associated returns to Companies House and HRMC. The annual return for the Charity Commission was correctly filed without adverse comment. I am happy to take any questions regarding these accounts.

Miss Inge asked whether we had approached all the fund raising groups in Buxted, for help. GC advised that representatives from various groups etc in the village had always been involved in the planning meetings of the BCHT but we were not actively pursuing fundraising at present for the reasons previously stated. She asked about possible necessary repairs to the Reading Room – GC advised that she should approach the PC on this point as the premises are their responsibility. She asked if BCHT would fund such repairs – GC advised that BCHT donations are strictly ring-fenced for the aims of the charity and that it was not possible to use them for any non-charitable purpose.

**Item 6. The next year – the latest Plans and Model (Vivienne & Nick)** Vivienne showed a series of the latest plans and drawings of the proposed hall and the site in a screen presentation supported by a 3 dimensional model and plans. This generated a number of questions from the audience including:

- a) Is the project costed – Not at present
- b) Will there be any opportunity to change the design etc after consent is obtained in the light of any possible changes – Once consent is given for the ‘concept’ and the outline minor tweaking can always be the subject of an application. Indeed planning regulations and interpretations may change in the future as a result of judicial reviews that are pending.
- c) Could the Rifle Club and Scouts be included in the new hall build – These groups had been approached many years ago but did not wish to join with the HOBI project. The opportunity was now lost.
- d) Do we have a list of potential hall users – No, not specifically, but we could easily create a list from the existing RR users and those groups who had sent representatives to the HOBI and BCHT planning meetings.
- e) What is happening to the Section106 moneys of £100,000 donated by the Grampion Site developers – The money has been deposited with WDC and is accruing interest. It is available to meet applications from the PC or the BCHT board to meet expenditure on the New Hall; there is no fixed date by which it must be used.
- f) Once planning consent is obtained, who will fund the remainder of the design process, building etc – BCHT will take over the role of client from the PC and instruct the architect etc.
- g) Who will manage the hall (operations, lettings, maintenance etc) once it is built – BCHT has the aim of building and maintaining the hall, it is intended that the trust will develop its board to accommodate the management role.

**Item 7. Resignation and appointment of Directors/Trustees. (Treasurer)**

Our Company Articles require all directors to resign at the AGM but they may, if they are willing to stand, be re-elected for a further year. This is intended to provide potential representatives of new groups in the area the opportunity to put themselves forward as Director/Trustees and have a say in how the Trust operates. Currently we have SIX trustees: Nick Tricker, Sheila Bartholomew, Eileen Claydon, Pauline Bonner, Councillor Maggie Dopson, and myself, George Claydon. All are willing to stand for re-election. The Ionides Trust has proposed two members of their board as candidates for BCHT – Councillor Jean Skinner and Rick Mudie – and Chris Hitchins indicated his willingness to stand as a candidate. No one else indicated a wish to be considered as a candidate. Can I have any proposals concerning re-election of these SIX Directors and the other potential Directors? It was proposed by Councillor Warner and seconded by Valerie Banks that the nine candidates be appointed en-bloc – agreed nem con. Treasurer to make arrangements.

**Item 8. Appointment of Auditor 2013/14. (Treasurer)** Councillor Michelle Warner (FCCA) has indicated her willingness to again undertake this role. I propose that she be so appointed. Agreed nem con – Treasurer thanked Michelle for her assistance in this regard.

**Item 9. Any other Business.** Valerie Banks proposed a vote of thanks to the BCHT trustees for all their efforts in sticking with the project. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.40pm

**G. Claydon (MBE) Company Secretary**