

Caryford Hall Association

Supporting information – submitted by group

Purpose of your group

Our Constitution states that the objects of Caryford Community Hall Association shall be:

- (a) to promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the civil Parishes of Castle Cary and Ansford and all inhabitants within a radius of two miles outside the said Parish boundaries (hereinafter called 'the area of benefit') without distinction of sex or of political, religious or other opinions by associating the local authorities, voluntary organisations and inhabitants in common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interest of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants;
- (b) to establish or to secure the establishment of a Community Centre (hereinafter called 'the Centre') and to maintain and manage, or to co-operate with any local statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such a Centre for activities promoted by the Association and its constituent bodies in furtherance of the above objects.

However, although the Constitution mentions the Hall as serving a radius within two miles, in fact it is used by people from much further away – in fact from all over South Somerset as was evidenced at the last lecture.

Some of our achievements from the last 12 months

We are a seriously well-used Hall – as we raise our profile we welcome the fact that we are being booked to capacity by a wider user group - from a one-day Reggae Festival to a string quintet from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (via Take Art). We had a Take Art Oscar Wilde performance at the Hall last week and will be booking Take Art events for their 2019/20 programme.

At the same time our regular users continue to re-book whilst Tai-Chi and Yoga are new classes for this year. With uncertainty about the future of the 1610 sports & leisure facility in Castle Cary we have been approached as a venue for netball and taken enquiries about the Hall being used as a mindfulness retreat once a month on a Saturday and for Scottish dancing evenings, both of which have attracted interest from local people.

We retained our Hallmarks 1, 2 and 3 status following a Hallmark visit to the Hall on 31st July last year. The three benchmarks are an indication of the way in which the Hall is governed and its interaction with the local community and we are proud to have retained these.

We have raised £15,900, which includes match funding, from local fundraising events in the last year.

Finally, we were recommended by the Community Council for Somerset as the venue for a BBC Somerset live broadcast of the Simon Parkin Show from 9.00 am – 12.00 noon on 24th January during National Village Halls Week. This was a great honour for us; we were chosen out of 325 village halls in Somerset because of the wide range of activities on offer at the Hall catering for all ages from toddlers to pensioners and the part these activities play in reducing social isolation and loneliness, bringing people together and improving fitness, as well as being a venue for private parties/celebrations. It was an opportunity for some of the regular hirers to talk about the events they put on at the Hall and created a lot of good will. It attracted a big audience.

More about the project and why it is needed

Whilst Caryford Hall is much used for a wide range of activities and continues to receive enquiries for new activities, we are only too aware of its shortcomings, perhaps inevitable in a Hall which opened in 1994:

- An inability to meet the needs of a growing population in its current layout.
- A meeting room which is small, dark and difficult to let out at the same time as the main hall, as being next to each other, sound leaks from one room to the other.
- A kitchen which is poorly laid out and outdated.
- Insufficient toilets and those we do have are way past their best.
- Insufficient storage.

The plan is to build a new meeting room at the other end of the building and therefore away from the main hall. This room will be almost twice the size of the existing room and will be fully equipped with a sound system, drop-down screen, hearing loop and a soundproof partition to divide the room into two. This will give us much needed flexibility as well enabling us to accommodate more bookings without impacting on those taking place in the main hall.

The kitchen will move into the vacated meeting room to provide a large, safe and workable space which can be used for more ambitious functions servicing multiple parallel events.

This in turn will enable us to enlarge the foyer and to provide a discreet drinks serving area which will also be a serving point for hot drinks for the new meeting rooms. We will increase and modernise the toilets, improve their energy efficiency and provide additional storage.

We know these improvements are needed because we are already oversubscribed with our current population. Ansford and Cary together have planning permissions granted for over 650 new dwellings which, if all built, will increase our population by about a third. Already new homes are appearing on Station Road so now is the time to do this upgrade.

There are several letters which indicate the support for the planned improvements to the Hall and why these changes are needed. We have strong support from Ansford Parish Council, Castle Cary Town Council and our current MP (David Warburton) and the planned improvements are identified as a priority in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Who will be involved in the running of the project?

We recognise that a project of this scale and budget requires proper organisation and management from the outset. The Hall management committee (comprising thirteen members of the local community including a representative from Ansford Parish Council) has been, and will continue to be, advised by a project steering group, including some members of the management committee together with other members of the local community with specific skills or experience in capital development projects. These include a chartered surveyor, a retired town planning consultant, a professor of economics and two who have worked within major national institutions.

At the same time we recognise the importance of careful cost control on all aspects of the work and have instigated additional internal monitoring procedures to ensure that the trustees are fully informed at all stages of potential costs and the funds available. We have a fully developed Business Plan.

Who will benefit and how?

The whole community. This is a hall for all. From toddlers to pensioners, the Hall is the community's venue for lectures, concerts, weddings, wakes, indoor sports, arts events, the annual garden show, and so on. Caryford Hall is the only facility in Ansford and Castle Cary and for miles around that can perform these functions.

Having a larger fully-equipped meeting room (divisible into two) will enable us to increase the number of bookings and remove the problem of noise leaking through from the main hall. We will also be able to broaden the uses to which the Hall is put and offer a more suitable space for people who find the main hall too large but the current meeting room too small and/or otherwise unsuitable.

A well-designed and equipped kitchen, and a separate bar serving area, will improve its appeal to people looking for a local venue for birthday celebrations, wedding receptions or suchlike and will provide a safer environment for those serving food or drink.

The current lack of storage means carrying large and unwieldy boxes of glasses and water jugs from the main store to the other side of the building. This presents health and safety issues and also means that some people are precluded from using the Hall because they cannot access the facilities. Extra storage in the kitchen and the bar area will remove this problem.

The Hall was built on a shoestring and the toilet facilities are now looking decidedly shabby and inadequate. Providing more toilets of a modern design, with improved energy efficiency will greatly improve the washroom facilities.

How we will promote the project during its development and after completion

All the way through, we have widely consulted with regular users and updated them and the wider community via our website, social media, the town newsletter, the parish magazine, press releases, community consultations and our own twice-yearly leaflet. We shall continue to do this once the development is complete and to promote the new facilities in the town and the surrounding villages.

We plan on communicating very directly with the residents of the new houses that Caryford Hall is their Hall.

How we will continue to fund the project

The Hall is entirely self-supporting and non-profit making with all day-to-day running costs covered by the hire charges. These charges are kept as low as possible so that all can use it. With a project of this size however, we do need the help of the Parish/Town Council and the District Council as well as grant making bodies to raise the required funds.

As well as the management committee, we have a team that focuses on local fundraising events with help from the Friends of Caryford. To date they have put on 37 events with a further 16 planned for 2019.

Separately we have another team working on grant applications and approaches to businesses and wealthy individuals.

This being our 25th anniversary year, we have just launched our Silver Jubilee Appeal to local residents, making clear to them the benefits of Gift Aid, and will continue to appeal for local donors and to apply to grant making bodies to cover the cost of the overall project. As building work begins and the community can see that progress is being made, we will launch an appeal for buy-a-brick, crowdfunding, fitting-out sponsors etc. We will not stop until the project is complete.