

Stansfield Village Hall - Chairman's Report 2021-2022

In February 2021 the village hall committee were successful in obtaining a grant of £2,040 from the DCMS/National Lottery, Local Connections Fund, to have a tarpaulin fitted to the hall roof to protect the hall interior while the remaining funding needed to install the new roof was being raised. While we had the builders on site a new fire door which operates as a push bar fire exit was fitted near the kitchen/bar area, with help from a locality grant from WSC.

Following the partial lifting of Covid restrictions on 18th May 2021, Tai Chi classes resumed and a very successful Village Plant Sale was held on the playing fields on the 22nd May raising a record £700 for the Church and the village hall.

With the help of the Friends of Stansfield Compasses, the goodwill of 14 local musicians, a handful of enthusiastic volunteers and a lot of careful planning around the Covid regulations, Stansfest 2021 took place in June raising over £700 towards the roof fund.

A restart grant was obtained through CAS & WSC allowing us to help make the village hall safer for hall users by installing hand sanitizers, a protective screen at the bar, and a contactless card reader system for taking non-cash payments, as well as getting in a stock of anti-bac cleaning materials and Covid safety signs. The entrance lobby had NHS track and trace Q code posters and a log book for those who did not have a phone with the NHS app.

Summer brought the eventual relaxation of Covid regulations, and the village hall saw the return of Stanfield Cricket Club's home matches, a pop up pub and fish and chip night hosted by Tony Hook, new Yoga classes with instructor Karen Franklin and the fabulous Mad Hatter's Tea Party which raised approximately £1,600, split between the village hall roof appeal and 'Stansfield Bloomers' projects.

After the hiatus caused by the pandemic the autumn saw the welcome return of regular hall users The Village Lunch and Knit & Natter as well as Stansfield Bridge Club.

We were overwhelmed by the support of the local community both as individuals, hall users and other local groups for taking our 'Raise the Roof' campaign to their hearts and helping us to raise around £ 12,300 through donations and fundraising events.

After much hard work the Committee managed to raise over £21,000 in grants, from The National Lottery Community Fund, Suffolk Community Foundation, West Suffolk Council, The Tudwick Foundation and Persimmon Community Champions towards the new roof. We were also delighted when Andy Smith of Total Access Scaffolding responded to publicity in the local media by coming forward and offering to donate the scaffolding needed for the roof work. With money put aside for the project from the SVHMC's own reserves that has meant that we were able to have the roof replaced before the winter weather started.

On 13th November we invited local people and other project supporters to a free event with Prosecco and canapés to celebrate the completion of the roof project. Local Rector, the Reverend Eve Bell provided a special prayer to allow space for reflection on the importance of this project for the community. This was delivered by Hugh Douglas-Pennant on Reverend Bell's behalf and in addition to his own generous and eloquent address.

In recent times our awareness of the importance of community activity and our human relationships in general, has become heightened. This was reflected in the overwhelming support of the local community for our roof refurbishment project and other community events and activities. As a committee we wanted very much to acknowledge this and carry it forward with our next project for the village which we announced at the roof celebration event. We are going to reclaim some of the village hall's neglected outdoor spaces and develop a community garden that all local residents can enjoy and get involved with. The first phase of the project is a sensory garden, which will be a place where local people can meet with friends in a safe way if we were to find ourselves living with restrictions again in the future.

The annual Stansfield Christmas Shopping Evening on the 24th November was another great success, as was the sold out Christmas Wreath Making Workshop on the 11th December.

Then we had the blip of Omicron seeing village hall activities canceled over Christmas and in to the New Year. Hall users returned slowly through January and February 2022.

There was fabulous community participation in the village hall Spring work party in February which focused on clearance of storm debris, a tidy up of the car park and a very thorough preparatory clearance of the site for the Sensory Garden. The hall was very much up and running again by March when a benefit Concert for Ukraine organized by two local musicians raised a fantastic £1,250 for humanitarian aid. In April the 'Infamous Stansfield Quiz' raised over £800 for the hall. The Cricket Club held their Curry Night and presentations on 9th April and we were delighted to see the Stansfield Easter egg trail and dog walk start and finish at the village hall on April 16th.

In March we delivered surveys to all homes with children in the village to see how the village hall can improve the inclusion of children and families in its activities. The survey also explored whether new events/activities would be of interest and appropriate to local families and sustainable. We will be following this up with an online survey to hall users in our larger catchment area of surrounding villages.

We are grateful to 'The Stansfield Bloomers' for their ongoing work to keep their beautiful plantings around the village hall looking spectacular. The tubs at the main entrance have looked stunning throughout the year. Importantly this has also helped to send out the message that our village hall has been regularly monitored and maintained throughout the period of reduced activity when security has been a particular concern. Stansfield Cricket Club has once more done a fabulous job of keeping the village hall playing fields and grounds in tip top condition throughout the year.

We'd like to express our thanks to the Parish Council for their financial assistance toward running costs and for donating pre-paid hall hire fees for their meetings cancelled during lockdown to the roof appeal. We are grateful for support and information provided on a regular basis by the Parish Clerk throughout the year.

Finally we'd like to thank all village hall users and supporters for their on-going support and cooperation through what have been strange and trying times.

Derek Adams
06/05/22