

Hawkesbury Hospital Hall – Chairman’s Year-End Report 2023

Charity Number 1176993

The village hall enjoyed a very busy year throughout 2023 with several new regular activities established and a significant increase in private event bookings. Following on from 2022 when most pre-Covid activities returned, and substantial investment was undertaken to improve the hall facilities using Covid and other grants, the plan for 2023 was to consolidate that investment with increased promotion of the hall as a venue for multiple occasions and events to increase bookings/revenue. Recognising that a significant loss in income from the closure of Pre-School and loss of the Football Club at the end of 2022 had occurred, we minimised spend this past year to cover essential maintenance only and focussed a limited amount of additional spend investing in further cost saving measures. The intent was to generate a modest profit that would demonstrate the benefits of the improvement programme in generating more bookings to support the financial viability of the hall, but also create funds to use alongside new grant applications to continue the hall investment and development programme in 2024/25.

The outcome is that the plan for 2023 has not only worked but has proved far more successful than we had envisaged. The loss in hiring revenue from Pre-School and Football was fully recovered through:

- Three large wedding bookings.
- Extended Easter weekend booking by the Gloucestershire Caravan Club (>50 units).
- Lots of private individual adult parties/events bookings.
- A fully sold-out 3 performance Drama pantomime.
- Huge popularity of using the hall for children’s birthday parties on weekends.
- Increase in regular hall weekly activities – e.g. yoga, circuits, pilates.
- A modest increase in the hire charges along with preferential rates for our regular hirers and for Hawkesbury residents’ bookings.

These additional events generated increased bar revenues and along with major efficiency improvements made to the operation of the bar to reduce costs and wastage, plus increased volunteer bar staffing, resulted in significantly improved bar profits. We also benefitted from an increase in fundraising through Hall Committee events such as The Big Breakfast, Gin Tasting and live music shows as well as increased donations in 2023. Furthermore, we maintained our focus on continuous cost reduction activities to reduce our out-goings. The most significant contributors being:

- Reduction in cleaning hours and materials (with closure of Pre-School).
- Reduced maintenance costs due to the investments/improvements made in 2022.
- Significant reduction in electricity cost due to our solar investment, plus payments from export to the grid resulting in a net profit from electricity generation/usage!
- Installation of a hot water solar module to complement the electricity usage.
- Reduced internet and website costs from our partnership as a trial user with Runfibre.

As well as reduced spend on maintenance activities, as mentioned earlier we limited the hall development spend in 2023 focussing on actions within our Environmental Strategy Plan aimed at reducing costs and reducing our environmental footprint. Many of these were completed at relatively low or in some cases zero cost due to the “improved housekeeping”

and “behavioural” nature of several of the actions we undertook. We did invest substantially in the installation of a remote operated zoned heat management system that enables heating of the hall to be controlled in four distinct zones and in-line with hall bookings. So no longer are we heating the large main hall on a cold January evening when only the upstairs meeting room is being used!

The result is that for 2023 the Village Hall Trust has generated an operating profit of nearly £12,800 – significantly greater than our expectation and start of year forecasts. This demonstrates conclusively that our heavy investment over the previous 18 months in improving both the range and the quality of the hall facilities results in increased bookings, especially for private parties and large events. However, it should be noted that in actual numbers of events 2023 has without doubt been an exception and we cannot rely on this becoming the norm for future years. Three weddings, a caravan club rally and numerous private parties, many of which include bookings from outside Hawkesbury, is far greater than we envisaged. Whilst the Trust is clearly in a far better financial position than immediately prior to the pandemic there is still much to do, and we cannot afford to become complacent based on 2023’s results alone.

The profit generated in 2023 also means we can commit a significantly greater amount of funding into our on-going development programme for both the hall and recreation grounds. Since the middle of 2021 we have been following a 3 year strategic plan aimed at ensuring the hall remains financially viable whilst meeting modern day expectations and ever increasing legislative requirements. This plan expires in mid ’24, and the results in 2023 indicate we are approximately a year ahead of our planned objectives which is testament to the hard work undertaken by the Committee. In mid ’24 we will produce the next 3 year plan whose principal aim will be securing the long-term financial stability of the hall whilst also continuing to further improve existing facilities and provide additional facilities, as grants allow. We will also enhance marketing and advertising activities to increase revenues through increased hall rental, including a complete re-vamp of the hall website. A significant part of the plan will focus on completing our Environmental Plan objectives with the target of achieving net zero carbon emissions from the hall and in so-doing further reduce our operating costs substantially.

I will finish the report by offering my sincere thanks for the support and effort of the Hall Committee members and of our many other volunteers without whose support the hall would struggle. I also offer a big thank you to all those regular faces that continue to support events at the hall throughout the year. Our village hall remains an entirely stand-alone entity. It is operated as an Incorporated Charitable Trust and is self-funding – it is not financed or operated by the Parish Council, nor does it have any major beneficiaries or donors. All committee members are volunteers who provide their time and effort free of charge and take on the responsibility of Charity Commission Trustees to enable the village hall to benefit the residents of Hawkesbury. The village hall is a community asset, and its continued operation and success will only be possible through the community’s use and support of it.

Andrew Webb,
Chair of Trustees – Hawkesbury Hospital Hall Incorporated Charity