

LONGFORMACUS VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE UPDATE

July 2020

Dear All

As we enter the new and still somewhat confusing phase of lockdown, it seems appropriate for the Village Hall Committee to clarify the current position.

In line with Scottish Government Policy, the Longformacus Village Hall is still in lockdown. The porch is open on a daily basis, from 10-4 as a community support exchange hub, assuming people maintain social distancing. This is not a food bank. There is an official food bank in Duns. This hub is managed by members of the Village Hall Committee, Heather Bewick and Pauline Stewart.

There have not been formal Village Hall Committee business meetings during this time. When these do take place, they are not anyway public meetings (these would be AGMs and EGMs) as per our constitution, and are concerned largely with the nuts and bolts of management – cleaning, paying bills and managing access during this time, health and safety etc. These areas have been managed between us over the telephone or email, during lockdown. Decisions are taken collectively. The current Village Hall Committee is Ettie Spencer (chair), Keith Noddle (treasurer), Adrian Colhoquon and Jonathan Wood (secretary). The AGM to select a committee should have taken place during the lockdown period but clearly this is not possible. Following consultation and advice from OSCR, we agreed that the next AGM should be a public meeting, held when lockdown was lifted sufficiently to allow a public gathering. It has been traditionally extremely difficult to get substantial attendance at these meetings in the best of times. We need a better representation of local inhabitants across the Longformacus and surrounding area going forward, and when we can announce a likely date for our AGM, this will be our aim. In the meantime, if anyone is keen to put their names forward to be co-opted onto the Village Hall Committee, bearing in mind its remit, ahead of the AGM, our constitution allows us to co-opt individuals for this.

Just to remind folk, the remit of the Village Hall Committee is to ensure that the village hall is a well-managed resource, run within the requisite requirements of health and safety, and designated insurance policies. It is not the remit of the committee to put on events or run services. That is for individuals and groups within the extended community to do. Our decisions are in relation to management of the hall facility generally, and health and safety in the hall specifically. They do not extend beyond that. Our focus is on the maintenance and improvement of the hall. New proposals, groups etc are always welcome, provided they follow the guidelines in our bookings form, and are responsibly run by those proposing them. There is no point in

suggesting the committee runs this or that event. The committee is a very small group of already over-committed people whose work is cut-out simply complying with statutory obligation. If a committee member runs an event, for example, that is something they have undertaken to do as an individual. It is not part of a VHC-run programme of events. Such a thing does not exist.

Meanwhile, Heather Bewick, Hall Housekeeper, Zoe Munro, Bookings Clerk and Kym Drysdale, Book-keeper, have been doing important work in keeping the business end of things in order. Our thanks to them. The new noticeboard is up. Many thanks to Zoe's partner, Chris for putting it together and to Richard Chambers who has taken on the task of planting up the beds in front of the hall.

Lockdown has impacted on the building development at the hall and put back the original timing of this. Scottish Borders Council Building Control is still to agree the final sign-off – a matter of fine-tuning details – and as soon as this is done, we will be able to begin works. For now, frustratingly, we have to wait. When work does begin, it is hoped that most activities – again lockdown permitting – will continue with the possible co-operation of Cranshaws Village Hall and other local venues. As you will remember, from my last bulletin and the public meetings held some long time ago, the new-build is designed to provide a community hub, open on a daily basis, with facilities for people to comfortably meet in. This was fully consulted on in the community – via both questionnaire and public meeting. The council has been through the requisite planning process. The Lammermuir Community Fund has approved and funded the changes and the Lammermuir Community Council has also given due attention and scrutiny to the plans – yet another opportunity for consultation. It has been a collective decision to take this forward. And if the community deems it is needed, the exchange element which has been established during lockdown might also be accommodated there. Most crucially, the design also enables the hall to be simultaneously used for other events, without interference. Currently, the hall is a single-use-at-a-time venue and there is no everyday meeting place for our community.

Best wishes to everyone – and stay safe during this next phase of lockdown.

Should you have any questions, please contact us at longformacusvhc@gmail.com

Jonathan Wood, on behalf of the Village Hall Committee.