

Tolpuddle Village Hall
(Charity No: 257403)

Tolpuddle Village Hall (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)
(Charity No: 1195647)

Annual Reports 2022-23

Introduction

This annual report covers the two charities that currently control Tolpuddle Village Hall. The Tolpuddle Village Hall (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) – now the recommended form for village halls - assumed responsibility for managing the Hall in 2021. However, the land and buildings remain vested in the old charity (No 257403) until the process of transferring them to the new charity is complete.

As the charities are inter-dependent, have the same Trustees and virtually the same object, it makes sense to present a single annual report covering their activities and accounts for 2022-23.

Charitable Object

The object of Tolpuddle Village Hall (CIO) is: “the provision and maintenance of a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Tolpuddle without distinction of *sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality or race or* political, religious or other opinions, including use for meetings, lectures and classes and other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants”.

With the exclusion of the words in italics, the object of the existing charity (No 257403) is the same.

Trustees and Constitution

Both charities are run by committees comprising the same Trustees: **Peter Walton** (elected chairman), **Jonathan Van Baars** (elected secretary), **Andrew Turner** (elected Treasurer), **Julie Batchelor** (stepped down in [March] 2022), **Nick Batchelor**, **Barbara Holtom**, **Penny Ruddock** and **Margaret Walton**.

The initial Trustees of the Tolpuddle Village Hall CIO are enshrined in the founding constitution of the charity as approved by the Charity Commission. The duty of the trustees is always to act in a way that is most likely to further the purposes of the charity; and they have powers to do anything that is calculated to further its object.

New trustees are appointed by a resolution of existing trustees having regard to appointing people with skills, knowledge and experience needed for effective running of the charity. However, the Trustees recognise that such appointments will almost inevitably be from the community and see the annual general meeting, in particular, as an opportunity

for the community to make known their views on membership as well as on other Hall issues.

Trustees of the old charity, while it continues to exist, are appointed annually by election at the annual general meeting.

The charity's founding document makes clear that the property and income of the Hall *must be applied solely towards the promotion of the object*. This means, for example, that the Hall is unable to make grants to other bodies unless by so doing it is advancing its own object.

Over the course of 2022-23, the Trustees met on 6 occasions at roughly two monthly intervals and, in addition, held an annual general meeting open to the public on 21 July.

The deeds for the Hall and its land have long been lost and the property is not listed with the Land Registry. The Trustees have appointed lawyers to reconstruct the title as fully as possible, to arrange for the property to be registered with the Land Registry and to transfer ownership to Tolpuddle Village Hall CIO. That work is expected to be completed during 2023 and, when it is done, the old charity will be wound up.

Hall Activities

Following the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic, the Hall has again been fully functioning during 2022-23. Indeed, the Hall this year has probably seen more usage than at any time in the last 10-15 years which is very encouraging.

Regular weekly hirers include a Toddler Group, a Pilates Group, a Yoga Class and a Table Tennis Group. In addition, with the pub currently closed, there is a community coffee club on Tuesday mornings and a community "bring your own drinks" evening on Fridays, including a fish and chip supper once a month, which has proved popular.

Other regular use is for band practice and for community events such as Harvest Supper, Quiz and chips nights, bingo and the Village Christmas Party.

There is also increasing use for private bookings – children's parties, christenings and meetings – and a local resident arranges music nights three or four times a year with folk and jazz bands which have attracted audiences of 50-60.

The Hall was also the venue for a series of crucial community meetings around the turn of the year to discuss and take forward proposals for purchasing the Martyrs Inn, by setting up a company with community shareholders.

Once a year, in July, there is the Martyrs Festival – a TUC-organised weekend – which attracts several thousand visitors to the village. The Hall is well used over the weekend and provides largely home-made refreshments and lunches on the Sunday which are very popular. In addition, working with St John's Church, the Hall provides breakfasts at the Festival Site during the weekend. Each year, the Festival generates an income of £2-3,000 for the Hall which is a significant part of our annual revenue.

In the last two years, the Hall has been delighted to work in tandem with the Tolpuddle Events Committee which was established to organise and run most of the events in the village each year. Proceeds from its events, many held at the Hall, are usually split between the Church and the Hall. This helps spread across the community the considerable load of effort that such events involve.

Hall Finances and Accounts

The Hall's business model is based on:

- giving priority to community use (in line with our object) while maximising charges from private and commercial hire when the Hall is free, so as to keep charges for the community as low as possible;
- expecting all activities to make some financial contribution to the running of the Hall, whether through hire charges, voluntary donations or a share of surpluses on events;
- investing when we can to deliver a modern, well-equipped facility that everyone will be happy to use.

With that in mind, we have a very simple hire charge structure with a single hourly charge, discounted by 50%, for community use or private (non-remunerative) hire by people living in the Parish. The charge covers use of all the Hall's facilities (ie electricity, basic kitchen activity, broadband, TV etc) but there is a one off additional fee for full use of the kitchen, including the range cooker and the commercial dishwasher. The hourly charge in 2022-23 was £12 (£6 for the community) and £25 per hire for full kitchen use.

This model is working. Hire income covers around a third of costs each year (excluding maintenance/replacements etc) and is rising. It is supplemented by income from the Martyrs Festival, community events, a 150 Club (local lottery) and donations.

The attached accounts for 2022-23 show the Village Hall CIO to be in a healthy financial position with a surplus at the year-end of nearly £20,000. However, this includes nearly £18,000 inherited from the old charity, much of which is the residual of Government hospitality grants received during lockdown. The Trustees felt able to use some of this money to modernise equipment (eg new chairs) but judged it prudent to set aside most of it for future major expenditure. In the next financial year, for example, we will incur significant expenditure on arranging for the registration of the property with the Land Registry and transferring ownership from the old to the new charity; and on repairs to the party wall between the Hall and Tolpuddle Hall next door.

Setting the £18,000 aside, annual income (from hall hire, the Martyrs Festival, the 150 Club and village events etc) was in the order of £14,000 while expenditure (costs of events and supplies etc and running costs) was nearly £12,000. Thus, we made a small surplus, but this was a year when we spent very little on replacements, maintenance and upgrades.

A major concern for the future is the rising cost of electricity which is our only energy source. The Hall has been insulated from this so far by having a fixed price contract with our electricity supplier, but that will change in 2024 when we will face a very steep increase in charges. In anticipation of this, and higher inflation generally, the Trustees have recently announced an increase in hire charges for 2023-24 – to £14.7 per hour. Our aim is to keep charges as low as possible, but in the current economic climate we will of course have to keep them under review.

Hall Improvements/Maintenance

During 2022-23, the Trustees have continued to invest to keep the Hall up to date:

- late last year, we installed new outside lighting;
- we also hired a professional gardener to cut back the bank at the back between the Hall and the car park and to clear overgrown borders and prepare the lawn for the winter; we plan to engage him to provide a quarterly maintenance service for the grounds;
- we have also cleared out and gravelled the path along the side to the kitchen door, much improving its look and accessibility;
- we have agreed with local volunteers to do lawn-cutting and border maintenance for the year ahead;
- we have purchased new outdoor tables for use in the garden, which can also be hired/loaned out for community etc events (if not in use at the Hall).

Concluding Remarks

It is particularly gratifying to see the Hall being used so frequently for such a wide span of activity. This is what a Village Hall is for, especially in a community with few other facilities. We all hope and now expect that the Martyrs Inn will re-open this year and, when it does, it will inevitably affect some of the activities that have been taking place at the Hall. The Trustees, though, are confident that we can work with the new regime at the pub and complement rather than compete with one another.

Peter Walton

Chairman of Trustees for Tolpuddle Village Hall CIO and Tolpuddle Village Hall

