

June 2016

Cummersdale parish, situated 2 miles South West of Carlisle, consists of 200 houses, with a population of 500. The three villages in the parish are Newby West, High Cummersdale, and Garden village.

Facilities include a primary school, public house, church, and a village hall which was once a bacon factory.

Background

Cummersdale Village Hall was built in 1893 as a bacon curing factory which fell into disuse after the First World War. It was bought by E W Stead McAlpins cloth printers in 1924 and given in trust to the community to be used as a 'village hall, billiard room, concert room, reading room, and recreation room'.

With a grant the hall was then refurbished, mainly by ex-servicemen volunteering to bring the hall into good repair. The following decades saw the hall at the heart of the community and fully utilised.

By 2005 the upkeep of the hall was becoming a problem. Limited resources supported running costs and routine maintenance, but did not enable any investment in major work and modernisation.

The Project

A feasibility study examined the options for future provision of a village hall facility in Cummersdale and extensive community consultation was undertaken including: individual questionnaires, one to one meetings with users, and an open meeting.

Building a new hall was not feasible so the favoured option was to upgrade and use the existing facility.

Consultation for the Cummersdale Community Plan provided further evidence that supported the need for a village hall, and the facilities and activities residents would like to see developed.



Cummersdale Village Hall

The roof consists of three gables and two valley gutters. Water ingress was a constant problem and the building had an unattractive damp smell.

The hall also needed refurbishment but prior to any internal improvements it was decided to completely strip and replace the roof.

Quotes were taken and although it was felt that the lowest quote of £18,000 was very reasonable, it was still a large sum of money.

Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust (CWMET) provided a generous grant of £8,000 which was a huge boost and really kick-started the fundraising efforts.

The committee organised many fundraising events and together with funding from Cumbria Community Foundation, The Hadfield Trust, Carlisle City Council, and Cumbria County Council, the target was reached.



Inside the main hall



New disabled toilet facilities

To date over £50,000 has been raised to improve the hall which includes:

- New disabled toilets and access
- Refurbishing the ladies and gents toilets
- New roof
- New windows
- New boiler
- Additional heating
- A new separate meeting room
- Redecoration of the main hall

The Learning

The committee realised that to keep this community asset viable, wide community engagement was paramount.

The much improved, and marketed, village hall facilities are now being used by individuals and groups both from the village and the wider surrounding area.

The hall is mainly marketed via the Parish Council website, notice boards, an A board outside the hall, and word of mouth which is essential.

Community engagement and consultation when planning the refurbishment also helped to get people talking, encouraging them to use the hall more, and promote it locally.

Increased use of the hall generates more income which adds to the future sustainability and supports on-going running and maintenance of the building - but grants are essential for bigger scale projects.

As far as fundraising is concerned the committee has always tried to include an element of match funding when approaching funders for help. The hall's own fundraising activities also helps to get the local community involved.

The main lesson is to keep the momentum going slowly forward, and keep chipping away. As with any old building there is always something needs to be done which can improve the facility. Currently we are raising funds to replace the kitchen.

Contact Details

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