

## **BADLESMERE LEES AND HALL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, 10 September 2024**

Committee members present: Chris Moore (Chair), Sue Earl (Secretary), Rick Blackman (Treasurer), Steve Burt, Ian Earl, Fred Gregory, Charlie Kirby, Ben Pullen.

This meeting was postponed from July.

**1 Apologies** received from: Dave Austin, Gareth Fulton, Tom Sisley.

### **2 Approval of minutes**

2.1 The minutes of the May meeting were approved.

### **3 Matters arising** (numbers in parentheses refer to entries in the May minutes)

3.1 (3.1) Constructing broom cupboards (IE) has been put on hold until all refurbishment has been prioritised and funds allocated.

The checking for asbestos – ACRK recommendations (Information sheet 14) state that a simple walk through should identify where asbestos is or is likely to be, and if in good condition no action is required unless it will be disturbed when building, or other, works take place. If found, during such works, small quantities can be bagged with care and taken to the local recycling centre for disposal, subject to making suitable declarations. The only likely asbestos location is the main entrance canopy, which will remain undisturbed for the foreseeable future.

3.2 (3.2) Footpaths cabinet: still awaiting KCC PROW to contact us. (IE to chase)

3.3 (3.3) DA and IE have reconsidered whether a direction sign is necessary for the defibrillator. Since locals will know where it is and advertising its existence on the main road may encourage theft, having no sign is now thought to be the better choice. IE will place signage in the village hall to tell hirers where the defibrillator is located. DA will cost a sign for placing on the triangle to point the way to the village hall from the main road.

3.4 (3.4) Northern layby post(s): GF is still to coordinate its(their) erection.

3.5 (3.6) Speed calming signage on the north track is yet to be progressed.

3.6 (3.8) CM has yet to liaise with the Estate regarding posts beside the South Track. IE pointed out the state/absence of the posts alongside the A251 to Elizabeth Roberts during a recent site visit. ER will take a look and ponder upon what action the Estate might take.

3.7 (3.10) The new account with EDF has settled down and direct debits are being taken monthly. Meter readings are being taken and submitted monthly by RB.

3.8 (3.11) A second Lees clean up took place on 9 June. Much was achieved, including landscaping at the village hall where the uneven surface was partly levelled and banking next to the new concrete path achieved.

The bonfire in the copse was not lit during the dry summer for fear of embers setting alight the dry undergrowth and crops in nearby fields, so will instead be lit in the Autumn (IE).

TS contacted CH, who willingly strimmed the triangle and the Leavemere verge.

- 3.9 (3.12) IE has yet to approach EKOGG to move their AGM, for the problems of parking in wet conditions may be resolved before February (see Agenda item 5c).

#### **4 Accounts**

- 4.1 The current balances in the four accounts as at 9 Sep 2024 were:  
BPH: current = £3 194.35, reserve = £7 673.81;  
BLPC: current = £1 334.21, reserve = £7 367.67.  
Expenditure due to the refurbishment has depleted the BPH reserve account. Because the turf was watered (necessarily) following its installation a sizeable bill was received from Castle Water. The next bill is also likely to be high as it will include the cost of the extra watering that took place in the dry summer months. (To match these extra costs a transfer from the reserve account to the current account will be made and allocated to landscaping.)
- 4.2 CM reminded all that any spending of funds must be authorised. This excludes normal, small cost, maintenance and the purchase of consumables.
- 4.3 IE gave an update on bookings: EKOGG are regularly hiring the hall for extra sessions, after a summer break the Sisters (associates of the Molly Dancers) are resuming Monday hirings, the Red Lion hired some chairs for their recent music event, Throwley and Sheldwich Parish Councils have both one final evening each coming up, Throwley Harvest Lunch is happening in October, and a Church Quiz Night in March 2025 has been booked.
- 4.4 BLPC: Concern was expressed that the income from the 100 Club does not cover the cost of the mowing of the leas. Without other fund-raising events, the reserves will last only a few more years. It was agreed that reducing the number of mowings is very much a last resort since long grass lying on the ground kills the grass underneath and allows weeds to proliferate. IE informed ER (the Estate) of our fears. She suggested the grazing of sheep might be a solution, and has sought and got Countess Sondes' approval of such a scheme. The sheep would need to be kept within electric fencing, which could be moved periodically. Dog walkers would need reminding of the need to keep their pets under control. Finding farmers prepared to put sheep on the leas might be an issue.

#### **5a The Hall – refurbishment works**

- 5.1 Further refurbishment will await the outcome of grant applications in order to determine what funds will be available. The size of the available funds will determine the order of priority of jobs and the amount and design of the work to be undertaken.
- 5.2 Renovating the hall floor and a redesign of the toilets are both high on the list of jobs, and are connected by the need to modify or remove the stage to achieve both. At least one booking a year is lost because of the state of the floor, and there is a need for at least four toilets (currently there are three), of which one is for disabled users. Some committee members were uncomfortable with the concept of unisex toilets. SB to revisit earlier ideas for the toilets and adjust them to allow direct access from the main hall. SB, CM and IE to meet to discuss options.
- 5.3 Lighting is also considered a priority. Various options and designs were discussed, but decisions have been left to a time when it is known what funds will be available.

- 5.4 The painting of the new cladding was completed in June. Despite being given the extra task of first applying T-Wash (that we supplied) KW charged us as per the original, and very reasonable, quote of £450.00.
- 5.5 A grab-bag of 10mm shingle has been purchased to continue the barrier between the hall foundations and the grass. Its job is to decrease the splash back from falling rain and to prevent plants including grass from growing against to the hall walls. Volunteers are urged to come forward to complete this task.
- 5.6 The ground next to the new path to the entrance door is still in need of further levelling and seeding with grass. It was suggested that a plastic grid be laid to prevent damage from the vehicles that are occasionally brought nearer to the door. That cars might be driven on the path (which has not been built to cope with this) was a concern. It was agreed that vehicles should not be driven from the track and to prevent them entering the post and rail fencing at the side of the track should be extended to the path. (IE)

### **5b The Hall – Community Events**

- 5.7 D Day 80. The event in June, which included lighting the beacon, was a success with many from the village and further afield attending. A note of thanks for our participation in the occasion has been received from Bruno Peek, Pageantmaster.
- 5.8 The 10k Run. To be held next year, on Sunday 14 Sep. The Estate and Phil Scutt to be contacted to confirm this date is acceptable to them (CM). The sub-committee (SB, RB, DA, CM) will meet separately from the Lees and Hall Committee to plan the event and its advertising. To promote it as 'beast/bad' or 'picturesque' has yet to be decided. That Macknade held a 10k Run and a Half Marathon last year wherein the latter was routed through 'Rabbit Valley', i.e. the chalk valley we use near Hogben's Hill, was of concern to some. Any profit will go towards the refurbishment of the Village Hall.
- 5.9 Halloween Party. CM will be holding a party from 3pm, Saturday, 19 October, which will take place at the White House. Volunteers to help out are very welcome.

### **5c The Hall – Car Park Extension**

- 5.10 With CM unable to attend, IE met Elizabeth Roberts from Lees Court Estate alone to discuss a proposal that the hall's car park be extended. In the Winter months, which were particularly wet this past year, participants to several events suffered from the mud and soft ground when having to park on the lees, some electing to walk from the main road. It has come to light that a number of potential bookings have been lost to other village halls because of the winter parking problems at Badlesmere. ER agreed to the car park being extended on the lees' side of the north track to allow a minimum of 10 cars to be able to park at right angles to the track. IE hoped that some form of marking of the bays could be possible, primarily to delineate between the track and the parking. Because of a possible drop from the parking area onto the lees and to discourage any driving across the lees ER is willing to supply round posts to mark the edge of the parking area. It will be up to the committee to arrange the erection of the posts (and to add reflectors), and to foot any cost from the removal of the type 1 added (or whatever material is selected) should planning regulations not allow this extension. Discussion in the committee revolved around the most suitable material to use, the

preparation of the ground, and the possible use of concrete 'grass guard' or a plastic grid. SB strongly recommends a porous top surface, such as shingle, to allow drainage and no pooling of rainwater. IE to investigate options and costs before going ahead.

## **6 Lees – North Track**

- 6.1 In the absence of GF, this item was left over till next meeting, to be held asap. It was noted however that GF supplied an invoice to the treasurer following the last meeting. However, payment has been deferred subject to clarification. No invoices have been received in regard to work carried out in February and September this year, nor has any expenditure by the hall or the lees committee been authorised. One grab-bag of 20mm shingle was ordered by SB in June, and four more in September.

## **7 Governance**

- 7.1 Grants. A grant has been received from Sheldwich, Badlesmere and Leaveland Parish Council to help towards the accessible path installed earlier this year. Concerning the Swale Community Infrastructure Grant, RB and IE have supplied CM the documentation necessary to show evidence of our insurance cover and financial status. The accounts were drawn up in the form the Charity Commission recommends. CM and IE have also met with a consultant sent by the Council who agreed the priorities were the floor and the toilets, but also suggested the lighting should also be prioritised. This grant has been approved subject to the receipt of the above documentation.

A Co-op Local Community Fund grant has been applied for. The King Charles III Charitable Fund is closed for 2024, but will accept applications in 2025.

- 7.2 Charity Status. It was agreed to proceed with acquiring CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) status as soon as possible. Having CIO status should aid in the applying for grants. Previous fears that our accounts would need formal (and so costly) auditing were allayed as the independent checking we currently arrange is deemed sufficient at our level of turn over. The basis of the application will be the existing Trust Deed (the only alterations being the removal of those parts relating to the 1970s when it was originally drawn up and no longer applicable) and so will exclude mention of the Lees and its Preservation Committee. CM and IE to progress.

## **8 Safety and Crime**

- 8.1 No accidents have been reported in the hall, and so no entries into the Accident Book made. The laying of the turf has made an easy and safe escape route should anyone need to leave via the Emergency Exit in the toilets. SB still maintains that this exit should be relocated so that people leaving the building at this end exit onto the concrete path at the rear of the hall. Since it is unnecessary (possibly left over from before the building of the toilets) and opens onto steep concrete, and potentially slippery, steps, the exit from the back of the stage will be removed when work is next carried out there.
- 8.2 Following IE's signing up to the SGN Alert system (in order to receive updates about the A251 road closure) he now receives fraud alerts from Kent Police and information from Neighbourhood Watch. Because IE wondered whether any should be forwarded to village residents, CM said he would be happy to receive the emails and will forward those appearing of value.

## **9 AOB**

- 9.1 The Swale BC/Suez bin saga continues even though six months has passed since the start of the new refuse collection contract. IE has been badgering Swale BC (when it became Leaveland's turn at getting no service, after Badlesmere's was solved) with varying results. Catch-up visits were achieved once Cllr Rich Lehmann became involved, but a regular collection has yet to occur. From w/b Monday, 16 Sep, new rounds and new days for collecting general/recycling waste come into force. We are all hoping a better service results.
- 9.2 The A251 closure (from the M2 junction until Lords Cottages due to maintenance work on the gas main) has caused some disruption, especially while local traffic was allowed north but had to come back south via the country lanes. The absence of a bus service has undoubtedly affected some residents. (The 666 is now running from Ashford to Challock and then via the A252 to Canterbury, and there are no buses from Faversham.) IE was thanked for securing passes for those on the committee who wished to have one, and for other villagers regarded as vulnerable. The closure, which began on 5 Aug, is expected to last until the end of Sep. Despite the disruption, for those who live on or near the main road the tranquillity has been very welcome!
- 9.3 Resilience. KCC have made plans in case Dover and Folkestone suffer enormous tailbacks when the requirement for UK travellers to provide fingerprints and facial scans when crossing to France as part of the EU's Entry/Exit System is brought into play in October. These include diverting non-commercial traffic on to the A251 to leave the A2 and the M20 reserved for lorries. Though it was agreed to open the hall should it be necessary, it was realised that no formal Resilience Plan has been made available to or drawn up by the committee. The committee felt that it was in the Parish Council's remit to have a Resilience Plan. IE to seek clarification with DA.
- 9.4 Welcomed was the report that the oak and the hornbeam, young saplings planted in the avenue parallel to the main road, have survived last year's dry conditions when early leaf drop occurred and are now thriving again.

**The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.**

**The next committee meeting is scheduled for 6.30 pm, on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, in the village hall.**