

19 May 2015

Hatley Village Association – annual report for 2014 / 15

By Peter Mann – HVA chairman 2015

This report covers the period April 2014 to March 2015.

By HVA tradition, the chairman serves for 12 months beginning in January of the current year – and for some peculiar reason gets to report on HVA activities before he took over.

First, I'd like to thank Harold Nickerson, my predecessor, for doing a sterling job keeping the HVA committee in order and getting us to knuckle down and organise some very successful events last year.

These included a talk on wildlife by SCDC's conservation officer Rob Mungovan, which raised £194; the RAF Tempsford talk in September brought in £392; the Christmas Tea netted £110 and the annual Quiz Night in February, which added another £375 to the coffers – £1,071 in all.

The only disappointing thing to report is the miserable attendance at last month's farming talk, so not surprising it only raised £104. Even so, the balance in the HVA account now stands at £3,249.

The thanks for this has to go to the committee and the time and effort they put in looking after the detail, organising speakers, distributing flyers, getting the hall ready, buying in wine and nibbles, making the raffle and things happen and clearing up afterwards.

The current committee is Harold, of course, Alan Pinney, Mick Marshall, John O'Sullivan, Sarah Brennan, Anne Hooley, Pippa Hardy (and though Pippa, David Barton who provides the sound equipment free of charge), Philippa Pearson, Clive and Jill Weightman and our latest recruit, Mervyn Lack.

Thanks also to the Parish Council for your support and to the sweethearts of the HVA committee for their fantastic help making tea and cakes and taking charge of the washing up after each event.

Coming up are two immediate events which the HVA supports: Philippa's talk here in the Village Hall on Tuesday 23rd June on the Swiss Garden at Shuttleworth – the proceeds will be going to Hatley St George church – and Philippa's other major church initiative, the Big Hatley Weekend starting on Friday 26th June... I trust everyone will be keen to participate.

We've also a naturalist talk in September, the Christmas Tea in December and the 2016 Quiz Night next February to look forward to.

Before then, we hope the Village Hall will have a new kitchen and boiler, both being well past their prime: Harold tells me the boiler is about 20 years old and the kitchen at least 30 years old.

In justification, the boiler is inefficient, costly to run, not fully functioning, poor at heating water and no longer economic to repair, especially as key parts for servicing it are difficult to obtain.

The kitchen is unhygienic, worn out, questionable if it meets current health and safety standards and is certainly detrimental for those who want to hire the hall or use the hall for fundraising.

The intention with the kitchen is to keep it simple: stay within the current kitchen area and provide a new, uncluttered, robust work surface, a new stainless steel sink, new cupboards and drawers, a new latex, non-slip floor, new wall tiling and update the electrics.

We'll keep the urn but nothing else – no cooking facilities, no microwave or hobs, so potential hirers have an attractive, inviting, clean area for their own hired-in caterers to use. Just as important, it minimises maintaining and cleaning the kitchen.

John O'Sullivan and I spent 2½ hours the other week ploughing through the Awards for All England application form – all 21 pages of it. Although there are a lot of award grants on offer, most are aimed at the disadvantaged rather than general purpose village hall improvements; the exception are awards made by land fill companies, but they are confined to a 10 mile radius and Hatley, perhaps fortunately, is not close enough to any to quality.

Awards for All has a maximum grant of £10,000. Excluding VAT, we are looking at £8,650 for the kitchen – that's a quote from Robin Harris – and £3,278 for the boiler, which is from Eden Heating. We have had quotes from other suppliers, but those are the two we prefer to go with.

The quick witted amongst you will have noticed $£8,650 + £3,278 = £11,928$. We also need to allow £500 for the electrics in the kitchen – but if we take off the £3,249 in the HVA kitty, we are looking for a grant of £9,179.

Awards for All grants are only given to voluntary or community organisations, schools, health bodies or parish or town councils.

As the HVA is a sub-set of Hatley Parish Council, with all its money in the PC's bank account, we are applying for the grant on behalf of the Parish Council.

Kim, as Parish Clerk, has to be regarded as the 'Senior contact' for the application – and, Kim, in order to complete the form, I'll also need to ask you for odd bits of information on insurance etc.

The Parish Council will be responsible for paying the contractors – and we've assumed it is able to recover the VAT elements of the costs.

However, for the application to succeed, there is one key matter the Parish Council has to be aware of – and I quote from the application form: it must 'Hold a lease of at least five years that cannot be ended by the landlord' – a point to be discussed in this Parish meeting, hopefully with agreement.

I will circulate the completed form to the Parish Council for approval before submitting it to Awards for All – which, by the way, say any start date should be at least four months after we have applied, taking us to late September, or more likely October, at the earliest.