

Topics raised during the Consultation Process

Many thanks to all the people that have engaged and responded to the consultation process regarding options to take forward our work in trying to make the Reading Room a fit for purpose facility for the long-term; all of your input was much appreciated.

We are sure that you will be interested to know that the following topics have been raised during the process and our thoughts on them:

Would minor refurbishment be sufficient?

A number of people have questioned whether minor refurbishment, what might be called a 'Do Minimum' option is a good way to go.

As Trustees we do not believe that this is a good option. The Structural Building Survey undertaken in 2015 identified a number of major issues with numerous parts of the building (roof, asbestos, heating system, electrical system, damp etc). All of these elements need addressing and we see little point in doing them piecemeal. As a Public Use building we are required to maintain a safe environment and it is becoming increasingly difficult to assure such an environment. In trying to do so we are effectively using our minimal financial resources inefficiently. We anticipate that without undertaking these works there will be an event in the not too distant future that will force closure.

We believe that the 'Do-Minimum' option is actually 'do everything' that was identified in the structural building survey report of 2015, which is, in effect, a major refurbishment. The Village survey conducted in 2017 also identified widespread Village support for a slightly larger facility to accommodate activities that might support the needs of today's community (see more below).

There is a maximum capacity of 60 at present because of the single exit. This is totally inadequate for a village of our population.

With the extension, a second fire exit and by redesigning the interior layout capacity will increase by approximately 40 persons. Given the increase in the size of the Village since 1909, when the existing building was constructed, we don't think this is unreasonable.

If we are going to undertake a major refurbishment of the existing building then it would make sense to also extend it at the same time. We will be able to cost the refurbishment elements separately from the extension in order to have this cost to hand.

Is there a demand for use of a larger, refurbished facility?

This is impossible to answer categorically. However, the current facility is used daily, social events are oversubscribed and fitness classes are limited by the size of the floor space. Also, all indications from previous surveys of the Village tell us that following improvement there will be a demand for use that is not there now because of the currently poor condition of the facilities which are currently unsuitable for hosting activities for babies, toddlers and children or senior citizens. In essence, we cannot predict usage, but the only thing for certain is that without it there will be no secular community facility in the Village.

Will increased size lead to increased parking problems?

Car parking and car usage is already a problem for both the Reading Room and in the Village as a whole. This is not a problem that the Reading Room trustees can solve in isolation. The proposed increase in capacity could make the parking problem slightly worse but we believe that this has to be balanced against the advantages of the Village having use of what will be a modern, fit for purpose, facility for use by the Community. Also, it should be noted that we are trying to provide a facility for the benefit of Village inhabitants, the majority of which (if not all) are within walking distance of the Reading Room. It is not our intention to actively pursue an increase in bookings from outside the parish. We will also ensure there is a bicycle rack in the external space outside the renovated building.

All this said, we would like to work with the Village and the Parish Council to actively promote not bringing cars unnecessarily to the Reading Room in the future.

Finally, it is worth considering that if there was to be no facility at all in the Village then Villagers would potentially be using their cars more, in and out of the Village, to get to events and facilities outside of the Village.

Will an increase in Capacity result in more noise?

As explained above the potential increase in capacity is around 40. It is anticipated that any increase in noise would be limited. Hopefully any new facility would be used for the community benefit of Villagers.

Can the Village 'afford' the monies proposed and what is the effect on the Parish Precept?

This has transpired to be a much bigger and costlier project than first envisaged.

The only way that we can afford to do this size of project is by raising the majority of the monies through a Public Works Loan (PWL), funded by a rise in the Parish Precept. We are still looking to raise funds through grant applications in order to reduce the size of the required PWL (and therefore any increase in Precept).

The sort of increase in precept required would be large in percentage terms; a 150% increase for some. However, expressing the increase in percentage terms only tells one side of the story. If the loan taken out is £250,000 then, in absolute terms, the increase in precept for a band D property would be £45 per annum or less than £4 per month which, we believe, would be a good investment by Villagers to allow the only secular community facility in the Village to continue in use. Full details of the effect on the precept can be seen from the table below.

A Public Works Loan cannot be initiated until the Village has agreed upon a way forward, we have a fully costed and planned project and we can demonstrate substantial support for the use of a PWL by the holding of a public vote.

Increase in precept by House Band based on annual repayment of a £250,000 loan

Band H	90.87
Band G	75.72
Band F	65.63
Band E	55.53
Band D	45.43
Band C	40.38

Band B 35.34

Band A 30.29

Note: This is the increase that has already come into effect for this financial year in anticipation of the village support for a PWL. If this support is not forthcoming then the precept can be repaid through a reduced precept in the future.