



PALGRAVE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Charity No. 269132

PDCC Chair's Report 2020

A year of uncertainty

Governance

To say we are in strange times is perhaps an understatement! It has been 15 months since our last AGM - the delay has been caused by the ongoing situation regarding COVID-19.

It certainly was a year of two halves. We got off to a good start but then COVID-19 struck and we were plunged into lockdown towards the end of March. All users/hirers had to suspend their activities when lockdown started and bookings at the Centre were cancelled.

It also meant that from March until July, our monthly Trustee meetings were held online via Zoom. Trustee Committee meetings continued to be held virtually until the first lockdown was lifted. Face to face meetings took place during August and September, but by October, COVID-19 restrictions forced the meetings back to Zoom and they have continued as so to now.

The year was also unusual in that the PDCC Trustee Committee did not have a Chair or Vice-Chair. However, this was allowable under the constitution if one of the Trustees acted as Chair at monthly Trustee Committee meetings and this was duly undertaken. Thanks go to those Trustees who chaired meetings.

Going forward the PDCC Trustee Committee will review and update existing policy documents and will begin a cycle of business planning.

Personnel

The PDCC has had several changes to the Trustee Committee this year. We have welcomed new members - George Georgiou as the representative for the Palgrave All Stars. Laura Forster as the FOPS (Friends of Palgrave School) representative; Laura has also taken on the Facebook page for the Community Centre, ensuring that a wide range of village-related information has been shared on social media. Sharon Cousins-Clarke, a former Parish Councillor and organiser of the Palgrave Community Response Group also joined the Trustee Committee. Jane McClintock has re-joined the Trustee Committee and has taken on the distribution of the Palgrave Star as well as encouraging people to contribute articles. Jane is looking forward to being able to organise events in and around Palgrave to welcome people back to the Centre once restrictions are lifted and the Centre can reopen.

To facilitate COVID-19 regulations, the Centre was risk assessed by Phil Dyer, to whom we are incredibly grateful, and measures were put in place accordingly. The Trustee Committee is thankful to Jane and Lee Lockwood who prepared the Centre to ensure it complied with the rapidly changing regulations and guidance, with a one-way system to minimise contact, guidelines for hirers and users of the hall to ensure

their safety and provision of sanitising hand gel for regular use. As a result, we were able to reopen the Hall for some regular classes and clubs in the summer until COVID-19 restrictions were imposed again.

Lastly, thanks must go to Heather Goddard for providing terrific secretarial support in what have been, very trying, circumstances and for all her hard work in producing the Palgrave Star magazine which is delivered to every household in Palgrave.

Highlights and Achievements

From October 2019 to March 2020 the Centre was busy with hirers making use of both the main hall and lounge. The playing field became the venue for a well-attended new fitness boot camp on Saturday mornings. The PDCC's Palgrave All Stars club provided sports and games activities which were much enjoyed by local children and their families on Sunday mornings.

The cinema was also very popular and attendee numbers were increasing each month. Thanks go to Michael Rogers for organising and managing the cinema evenings.

Unfortunately, in late March 2020 national lockdown restrictions were imposed and following Government Guidelines the Centre was forced to temporarily close its doors to the public.

However, Jane and Lee Lockwood used this time productively and were able to make a number of improvements including redecorating the Lounge, Main Hall and the kitchen; an upgrade of the Centre lighting to a more cost-efficient system and sprucing up the garden areas.

The wind turbine continues to provide pollution-free electricity. The particularly windy weather in the early months of 2020 boosted the annual output to over 20000kW. During lockdown, the turbine has been the one source of our own income to help with running costs. Feed-in tariffs provided £6,600 and substantial savings were made by using our own electricity instead of paying for units from the grid.

A volunteer working party cleared the brambles and undergrowth from the edges of the playing field to prepare for the wildflower areas planned for later this year. A number of small trees have also been planted to one side of the field and opposite the Community Centre. Thanks go to all the volunteers who worked so hard while also abiding by social distancing rules.

Financial Review

The extraordinary events of this year have had a significant impact on the operational activities of the Centre; however the Trustees have managed funds prudently over this period. Like many small businesses and charities, the PDCC has been eligible for COVID-19 support grant funding and the Trustees have been successful in securing this money, leaving the Centre in a strong financial position to bounce back from disruption caused by covid.

A full overview of the PDCC financial performance is available to read in the Treasurer's Report, and the accounts, which have been independently examined, have also been made available to the members.

Future Plans

So how to move forward and plan for the next 20 years? We believe that the Community Centre (and playing field) has great potential and we are keen to protect it for future generations as a thriving asset, at the very heart of our rural community. We hope that local people will recognise that it is *their* Centre and will cherish it.

We plan to enhance and improve our facilities to keep them up-to-date and make sure they meet the needs of potential and existing users. This will safeguard the future of the Centre and ensure that it provides a high-quality, affordable and accessible community facility. We believe the Centre should be relevant to and support as wide a cross-section of the local community as possible. We want to know more about what people think the Centre should provide in terms of activities, events and services, so that we can develop our offering accordingly.

Clearly then, we must start by consulting and engaging with as many of Palgrave's residents as possible to find out what the local community wants from the Centre. We plan to undertake this during 2021. The Community Café events we held in 2019 have already given us a broad list of ideas such as:

- Extending the building to increase the number of rooms available
- Upgrading the kitchen
- Car park improvements
- Landscaping
- Kiosks for refreshments
- Making more use of the field – possibility of adding a community orchard or attractive softer spaces / garden

We intend to improve the marketing of the Centre, promoting it more effectively and thereby increasing its use. We will also explore the funding options available to enable us to expand and improve the Centre.

It is hoped that some open-air events will be allowed to take place later this year. We will publicise them in the Palgrave Star and on our Facebook page.

Conclusion

The Trustee Committee is committed to making sure that we focus on the new challenges ahead and that we do everything in our power to keep the Centre open and in use for everyone to enjoy - a big challenge given the current climate.

However, the year behind us is over, we can look back and feel justifiably proud of what was achieved over that time. The year ahead is an unknown in ways we have never had to deal with before. However, I have every confidence that we will come through these challenges stronger and better than before.

Thank you.