

Boreland Village Hall Refurbishment Phase 3 - Final Report

Introduction

Boreland village hall ("the hall") was built in the early 1950's and is a community owned facility. There are no other similar facilities in the community.

The hall is well positioned within the village of Boreland supporting a small rural community of around 200 residents with a primary school, church and a number of established groups and events throughout the year. There is good access from the main road and a footpath from the village to a large surfaced parking area. There is also a large grassed area adjacent to the hall.

The voluntary not for profit organisation known as Boreland Village Hall is a charity registered in Scotland (charity no. SC003337). The Management Committee (all volunteers) is responsible for the day to day management of the premises. There are currently 12 committee members with varying skills and interests. There are no employees.

Background

Why

The building was structurally sound with the roof replaced around twelve years ago and double glazed UPVC windows fitted in 2004. However, it had been recognised that modernisation was essential as the kitchen and toilet facilities were dated, inadequate and did not meet the required environmental and health & safety standards. The wiring urgently required to be renewed, the heating system was neither efficient nor adequate and the storage facilities were not sufficient.

The deterioration in these basic amenities had resulted in the utilisation of the hall reducing over the last five years. If no investment was to be made in the building it would deteriorate further and eventually would have to have been closed. The building needed to be brought into the 21st century to provide modern amenities and a building that would be warm, safe and comfortable as well as energy efficient and accessible to the whole community.

The Management Committee's objective was to improve and make better use of a vital community facility creating a modern, energy efficient hub for the community which would be fit for the 21st century where members of the community and visitors could enjoy a wide range of activities for learning, health & wellbeing, fellowship and fun.

How

Following consultation with hall users and the wider community a sub group of the hall committee was set up in 2008 to take forward this community led project. It was tasked with developing a refurbishment plan and working with an architect to obtain planning approval from the local authority. This was completed in early 2010.

The sub group proceeded to prepare and submit a full application to the Scottish Rural Development Programme in July 2010 (having got through stage 1) but were disappointed when the Scottish Government changed the criteria retrospectively which in effect meant our application was rejected before it was considered.

As a result of the foregoing, the sub group reviewed the fundraising strategy and took the decision to phase the refurbishment plan in three stages which ensured we were in a position to take advantage of the funding opportunities available at that time.

Phase 1 involved the creation of a new kitchen area, re-wiring of the building, new lighting and insulation of the roof space and Phase 2 saw the installation of a renewable heating system in the main hall and kitchen. Almost £50k funding was secured to meet the costs of Phases 1 and 2 and the work was completed in September 2011.

While Phases 1 and 2 were being carried out the sub group began to source the funding required for Phase 3 which was to involve building an extension to accommodate new ladies and disabled toilets, a storeroom and cloakroom, formation of new gents toilets from within existing building, refurbishment of the internal walls and floor of the main hall, new external lighting and all internal and external decoration.

The total required was finally secured in February 2012 from the following funders:-

Dumfries & Galloway LEADER Programme	£43,000
Dumfries & Galloway Council Village Halls Improvement Scheme	£20,000
The Foyle Foundation	£5,000
The Garfield Weston Foundation	£5,000
Awards for All	£9,588
Minsca Windfarm Community Benefit	£1,000
Own Funds	£4,252
In Kind contribution - project management	£1,200
Total	£89,040

The Project

When, What and How

Following a tender process, the main contractor was appointed (local builder) and he had on board four other contractors (joiner, plumber, electrician and plaster). We contracted directly with the heating, flooring and painting contractors. The project manager was a member of the sub group (Kate Nutt).

Phase 3 of the refurbishment began in April 2012.

The extension was built to wind and watertight stage first with all internal work beginning thereafter. The extension was fitted out to house the new ladies and disabled toilets as well as a storeroom while the existing entrance and gents toilets were converted into an entrance, cloak area and cupboard. New gents toilets were created from the area that previously housed the ladies and disabled toilets.

Installing a form of renewable heating and adequate insulation was key in the development of the project as we looked to cut energy consumption and reduce CO₂ emissions whilst making the hall more comfortable for users. We wanted an innovative solution and not just opt for the simplest solution.

Having already installed an air source heat pump heating system in the kitchen and main hall during phase 2 (air to air) we decided to install a similar system in the toilet and cloak area which would also provide hot water (air to wet).

We consider this approach innovative as we didn't simply choose to continue with the electric heating we had, or look at another conventional form of heating, but brought something new into our community which will have benefits for all. It has also generated an interest in renewable energy in the community.

Meanwhile, the internal walls of the main hall were stripped back to the brick with the upper section boarded and plastered and the lower section fitted with tongue and groove boarding and the oak floor sanded, varnished and a badminton court marked out. The external walls of the extension were rendered and the existing walls patched. All internal and external walls were painted and new external lighting was installed.

The project was completed in October 2012.

Budget

The project came in £1410 under budget. Approval was obtained from LEADER to use this underspend to install blinds in the main hall and kitchen as well as to construct a fence to screen the external heating unit located at the front of the hall. Total cost of this was £1447 resulting in a small overspend of £37.

Lessons Learned and Best Practice Model

The one main lesson we learned during the project is to make sure you research the contractors you have no working knowledge of and make sure you obtain references. All our contractors except one were known to us and all those we knew were fantastic. However, had we had knowledge or experience of the other contractor we would almost certainly have chosen another company.

In terms of a Best Practice Model, there are certain key elements of why our project progressed more or less on time and on budget that we see as key elements of a Best Practice Model:- 1) development of the project plan involved people with all the necessary skills and knowledge required, 2) the project was discussed in detail with the main contractor and any potential issues ironed out before work started, 3) communication during the project was only between the main contractor and the project manager, 4) regular meetings/discussions were held between the main contractor and project manager.

Marketing

We held an open weekend in October to give people the opportunity to come along and see the refurbished hall and this gave the committee the chance to market the hall's potential use. Representatives from the press attended and there was very good press coverage in the local press.

The community newsletter has also been used to market the hall to the local community. We are also hoping to create a community website and this will provide another avenue for marketing the hall.

Who has benefited

The people to benefit from the project are first and foremost the immediate community. There are around 200 people living in our community with ages ranging from 0-80+. Public transport from our rural community is limited and many people in the community cannot access activities and services unless they are available in the village hall.

Everyone in the community has the opportunity to benefit from the refurbishment of the village hall. The availability of a modern, comfortable,

affordable community facility allows anyone in the community to enjoy a range of activities and social events.

Feedback to date has been excellent and people want to use the hall for a range of activities. This is evidenced in the Feedback Forms completed (Male under 25 - 13, Female under 15 - 12, Male over 25 - 29 and female over 25 - 42) and the letters from groups (7).

There have been a number of well supported, varying events taking place in the hall since it was complete:- 2 games nights, a celebration night, 3 fundraising events for different groups and the school Christmas concert. Other events are planned for the next few months including a film night, a talk and a curry night. We are also hosting the Happy Hour Theatre in May and staging a pop up Tearoom in May too as part of Spring Fling weekend.

A new badminton group started in November and it uses the hall weekly. The craft group has continued with membership doubled and meets every second week while the school use the hall weekly for PE and at other times for other activities. The community show committee, hall committee and community fellowship committee use it regularly for meetings. There are also ongoing discussions about other new groups starting and private lets.

None of this would have been possible if the refurbishment hadn't taken place and we would therefore not have been able to offer the community a variety of activities on their doorstep.

People from outwith the community who attend activities and events at the hall will also benefit from the work that has been done.

Sustainability

Overheads will continue to be met from letting and fundraising income. We want to keep letting rates affordable to encourage use so may find we need to hold a couple of fundraising events each year to build up reserves and help meet overheads. However, it is hoped that eventually the letting income will be sufficient to meet all overheads and retain something in reserve without the need for fundraising.

Strengthening Community Spirit and Civic Pride and addressing Social Cohesion

Having a community owned, modern facility that the community can be proud of has certainly strengthened community spirit. There is a buzz in the community that we haven't had for sometime and a real enthusiasm to use the hall to enjoy activities and meet socially.

Events that have taken place since the refurbishment was completed have been well attended and this has given people the opportunity to interact with others, meet new people and/or learn new skills and take part in physical exercise.

There are more volunteers to help with events and activities and more suggestions and ideas for events and activities.

Having access to a range of opportunities virtually on the door step helps to alleviate social and geographical exclusion for those people unable to travel due to age, disability or other barrier such as poor public transport or financial reasons.

For everyone in the community it provides a place to enjoy physical, recreational and social activities bringing people together leading to improved social interaction and better quality of life. All this will lead to a more cohesive, active community.

Ian Roxburgh
Chairman
Boreland Village Hall
16th January 2013