**Crathes Public Hall Trust (SCIO 043007)**

**Annual Report**

**1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023**

At the AGM in June 2022, we said farewell and thank you to 5 long standing Trustees. Flowers and vouchers were gifted to mark their service and valued contribution to the Hall and the Community of Crathes.

Geoff Knight and David Morrish agreed to become Hall Trustees and were welcomed on to the Board with immediate effect.

Later in the year we also welcomed Jac Elliot & Derek Johnston but unfortunately lost David. He remains a valuable link with the Community Council and still helps with Hall maintenance and the all-important fire alarm testing.

Moira Cordiner stepped down as Convener but stayed on as a Trustee. Neil McHattie took over as Convener.

At this time there were two Trustee vacancies.

Following the lifting of the COVID restrictions the Hall returned to business with the regular user groups at the Hall settling back in to their weekly slots. We remained vigilant however, and continued to supply hand sanitisers, surface sprays, encouraging regular ventilation and providing an enhanced cleaning regime.

Yoga, TRX, Core strength, Table Tennis, Footstars, Morris Men and HIT fitness continue to be extremely popular at the Hall and have also been joined by Rhythm Time and Messy Play groups, which all contribute to a healthy 120 hours of hire / use per month. This makes Crathes Hall one of the busiest in the Shire.

New hire rates came in to effect on 1 April 2022 without issue.

**Web Based booking**

A new web-based booking system was launched during the summer of 2022. It is embedded within the Hall website and allows far easier engagement between users / hirers and the Trustees. Trustees Jac Elliot, along with John Gaunt, are to be congratulated for overseeing the smooth transition to the new system and efficiently managing its day-to-day operation.

# New Hall project

# In November 2022 at a Trustees meeting the new Hall project was discussed. The small group who had been working on the fund raising for the project, provided an over-view of the current difficulties being encountered, in terms of raising the ever-increasing sums of money required.

# Following discussion, it was agreed in principle that the project to build the new Hall be stopped and the viability to refurbish the existing Hall be explored. The Community were circulated via the Mailchimp mailing list and via Social Media. A handful of positive and encouraging comments were received in support of the Trustee’s decision.

# As a result of the change of direction, OSCR were notified. They confirmed that only those who had given substantial donations (3 individuals) need be contacted, provided with an update of the current position, and offered their funds to be returned. All three were consulted and agreed, in writing, that their donations could be kept to support the refurbishment of the Hall.

# A formal application was later submitted to OSCR seeking approval for the change of use for the funds raised under the auspices of the new Hall build.

# The small funding group have worked hard to re-direct the focus, gather options and secure funding for the Hall refurbishment. The change in direction provided funding options that did not exist for the new Hall project. It also enabled the group to explore options centred around making the Hall a more efficient and eco-friendly facility.

# The insertion of insulation was always going to happen as were the replacement windows. Following an energy efficiency survey from Business Energy Scotland in February 2023, several funding options became available.

# Business Energy Scotland (SME Loan)

# Vattenfall (o/s wind farm)

# Community Ownership Fund

# CARES

# National Lottery

# The above have all been contacted and applications submitted to support various elements of the upcoming works that are due to go ahead in July 2023. A fuller update will be provided in next year’s annual report.

# Events at the Hall

# Coming out of COVID, organised events were slightly fewer than normal. In June 2022, the Hall was visited by world renowned musicians Tony McManus and Julia Toapsern who provided a superb evening of skilled musicianship as well as few tales and stories of their globetrotting musical encounters.

#

# NEAT (North East Arts Touring) also continue to bring an eclectic range of events to the Hall (6 events this past year) with amongst others, Elsa McTaggart and Gary Lister dropping in past in November for quite a unique, but thoroughly enjoyable musical experience.

# The day before Elsa and Gary arrived, a ladies Prosecco Afternoon Tea was held in the Hall. The event saw 120 women and one gentleman, attend to enjoy a lovely afternoon of entertainment, home-made sandwiches, and home bakes and all washed down with 130 bottles of Prosecco!

# Along with the raffle, “guess the square” and sundry donations, the event raised a magnificent £3500 for Hall funds. A tremendous reward for all the hard work and effort the small team that created and managed the event had put in.

# The Hogmanay Ceilidh also went ahead. We were very fortunate to have the Johnny Hardy Ceilidh Band playing at the event. Four exceptionally talented musicians gave us an evening to remember and we’ll hopefully see them back in the Hall at some other time………..maybe Hogmanay again!

# At each of the above events, the new sectional staging was put to good use. This was purchased following a successful application to the Midhill Windfarm via the Community Council and proves to be a valuable addition to the Hall resources.

# At a Trustees meeting in February 2023, it was decided that the planned Ball for the Hall at The Marcliffe Hotel was an unviable event. In the circumstances the Trustees agreed to take the band to the Hall and run the event there, with reduced prices and head count. On Saturday 1st April 2023, Slinky played to a busy Hall and gave all attendees an exceptional evening. Once all costs had been paid, a handsome £600 was generated from what was potentially a “non-starter” of an event.

The famous “Crathes Fly” continues on the first Saturday of each month and regularly brings in an array of people from the local area as well as from further afield.

Over the course of the past report year the Hall has seen a steady increase in the amount of events being booked at the Hall, which is wholly encouraging.

There have been -

# 1 x 3-day Scout / Ranger activity session

# 1 wedding

# 1 craft workshop

# 1 windfarm exhibition

* 1 political hustings event
* 31 children’s parties
* 10 band rehearsal sessions
* 9 funeral teas

# 6 family celebration / private parties

# 5 private meetings / courses

# 4 craft fairs

# As well as the above the Hall has also been used for other events such as –

# 6 NEAT

# 5 Trustee led

# 3 Crathes Primary School – non chargeable

**Station Wood**
The process to purchase the 2.2-acre woodland surrounding the Hall from the National Trust for Scotland is ongoing. The purchase is supported by the Scottish Land Fund. Albeit, out with this report period, at the time of writing the transfer of ownership is within sight.

**Other matters**

1. **Aberdeenshire Council Transport Hub**

The board of Trustees were approached by the Council with a proposal to site the above in the Hall car park. This has been spoken about for a number of years, but this is the first formal approach about the subject as it coincides with matters being dealt with by our friends in the Community Council relating to pavements, speed limits, traffic gateways and street lighting. As the Hall owns the car park and the Hall itself is getting busier, the prospect of surrendering “control” to a third party was broadly unappealing. The matter is due to be openly discussed at the AGM however consensus suggests that the proposal is unlikely to be supported by the Trustees.

1. **Heating costs**

During the winter months, the cost of heating the Hall rose enormously. This was in part due to the ongoing cost of utilities, as well as the lack of insulation within the structure of the Hall itself. On a couple of occasions, and despite notices to the contrary, Hall users have adjusted the heat settings within the Hall. On one occasion the user forgot to turn the settings back and the heating was left on for a prolonged period, the cost of which ran into hundreds of pounds. As a result, it has been decided to install a remotely operated, tamperproof system at the Hall. The research and work for this is still ongoing.

1. **Chairs**

Given the ongoing attendances at events at the Hall it was decided to purchase a further “stack” of 25 chairs for the Hall. An application was submitted to Midhill Windfarm who have agreed to fund the purchase which will increase our capacity to 125 seats.

The Hall is a hugely important resource for the Community and is a facility beloved and enjoyed by many, many people. The decision to stop the new Hall project, whilst broadly disappointing, was the correct decision in the current climate and came as somewhat of a relief for some.

It has however had a positive effect in that it has generated a renewed vigour amongst the Trustees and the Community to direct efforts in to making the existing Hall the best place it can possibly be to safeguard it’s use for generations to come.

**Neil McHattie**

**Convener,**

**Board of Trustees**

**June 2023**