

RICKINGHALL VILLAGE HALL REPORT 2023-24

With the worst impact of Covid now hopefully behind us, the past year has seen a further small 5% uptick in the number of bookings over the previous year. The weekly classes & gatherings account for the majority of these booking and some have been very long standing so it's great to see that the hall is still being used by a wide cross section of the local community.

Unfortunately the youth's football booking was rather short lived, more down to the club's arrangement with their league rather than any shortcomings with the facilities but it is still a shame the pitches remain dormant bar the occasional casual users. The field has been fully utilised during the summer months however, with the Autojumble and the revised format Country Market on the second Saturday every month, the combination of which has proved very lucrative for the hall. The Autojumble seems to have benefited from the extra publicity through our re energised social media exposure and website as well as new roadside signs and of course word of mouth. Whilst the committee decided to simplify/reduce market stall holder charges, the broader offering of items for sale seems to have been popular with visitors and the café is a key revenue stream for the hall.

Profits from the volunteers' efforts running the hall are primarily used for upkeep and improvements to this community asset. Income from regular activities/hires (excluding capital grants for specific projects) is pretty stable year on year and the hall still achieved a revenue of over £10,000. Our financial position therefore, is stronger still and we're better prepared to weather any similar Covid type storm, all of which is only possible with the unfaltering input, month in, month out, of the committee members and supporters for which we're very grateful.

The major project which has literally 'gone live' two days ago is the installation of a PV panel/battery array, fully funded through a variety of grants. These have been secured from both Botesdale & Rickinghall Parish Councils, the locality budgets of both District Councillors Gilly Morgan & Jessica Fleming, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council & the National Lottery. Coupled with the replacement of all of our Velux windows, we hope this will enable us to ride out the huge spikes in electricity costs without having to impact hire charges for the foreseeable future, not forgetting of course the green credentials that come with it. The committee is in discussion with an organisation supporting EV charging point installations and we're hopeful this may come to fruition during 2024 too. The committee is always keen to hear ideas from the wider community as to what other facilities people would like to see at the hall to make it even more of a useful hub for the village.

We're sorry to have lost a committee member or two during the year but we've also had a few new faces join us with one or two further recruits already pencilled in for the summer. We have specific roles currently vacant on the committee so any volunteers would be most welcome.

I'd like to thank the members of Rickinghall Parish council and their clerk for their support of the hall and look forward to strengthening our ties for the future. I'm confident of a successful 2024 and look forward to seeing the planned improvements to the hall facilities bear fruit for everyone.

Dominic Ebert
Vice Chairman
Rickingall Village Hall Management Committee