

MEDIA INFORMATION FOR NEW VICTORY HALL

MAY 2009

After more than 10 years of fund-raising, work finally started on the new village hall for Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf in February 2009. The construction is on schedule and the £510,000 project, which is supported by a £177,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund, is due to be completed in August this year. Several local organisations and charities, including (amongst others) the Norfolk Rural Community Council, the John Jarrold Trust and the Geoffrey Watling Charity have contributed valuable funds with the balance coming from the sale of the existing village hall and from the many community fund-raising events that have been held over the past 10 years.

The building will be one of the most environmentally friendly village halls in Britain, constructed from timber frame with straw bales and shredded newspaper as the primary means of insulation. It will have green roofs, low energy lighting and be heated using a £40,000 Ground Source Heat Pump system that has been funded with grants from the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund, the Community Sustainable Energy Programme and the Low Carbon Building Programme.

It is expected that, once completed, the building will not only greatly enhance the local services and amenities for the surrounding villagers but it should also appeal to organisations that wish to hold small exhibitions or conferences as it will have basic conference facilities available. Funds are currently being sought to allow the new building to have a touch-screen tourist information facility to help visitors identify local places of interest, in the hope that this will stimulate demand for local services too.

The local community, including children, is being actively encouraged to participate in the construction phase where appropriate, so that they genuinely feel involved in the project. Over 170 people visited the site on 13th April and helped to move the straw bales into the hall ready for use by the main contractor, John Youngs Ltd. The straw bale walls for the main hall are scheduled for completion by May. The completed hand-rendered sections look wonderfully rustic but should last indefinitely if properly maintained.

Another round of community involvement is planned from **26th June to 8th July** inclusive, when volunteers are needed to help build and render the straw bale circular meeting room. This is expected to take about 2 weeks from start to finish and about 15 to 20 people will be working on the project each day. No experience is needed as training will be provided by Amazonails (the straw bale building consultant for the project) and volunteers can help for anything from one day to the full 12 days. Work will include building the walls and openings, trimming and installing the straw bales, applying several coats of lime render to the outside walls and rendering the inside walls with clay.

A community open day is also planned for **4th July** when local people will be able to visit and inspect the new hall and they will also be encouraged to help with the clay rendering for a limited time – which should be very messy but good fun...

This is a potentially interesting topic for media articles relating to eco-buildings, rural life, community involvement so if you are interested in covering it please contact Ian McFadyen, Trustee Project Co-ordinator on 01692 630150, email ian.mcfadyen@victoryhall.info .