

Dear Resident,

March 2007

Things have been moving quietly but steadily since the last Newsletter, some 4 months ago. The lottery application was submitted in late November and a number of smaller grant applications have been submitted since then. To date we have received one positive response and no rejections which is a fine start - hopefully we can keep up this strike rate for all our applications!

2006 was a fantastic year - we raised the most funds since 1999 / 2000 (when generous donations from the Parish Councils significantly boosted revenues). The total increase in the building fund kitty in 2006, including bank interest, was almost £9,000 - so our thanks go to all of you who have assisted with this in any way.

2007 promises to be even better. Donations of over £2,000 have already been received (we are especially grateful for the funds of almost £1,000 donated by the Thompson family in memory of Nonni). The ever popular local barn dance will be revived this year - part of the proceeds will go towards the new hall - and we hope to benefit from a number of other enjoyable fund-raising events which are currently under discussion. The 200 club also continues to be a great success.

The Victory Hall constitution has been updated and submitted to the Charity Commission for approval. The Building Fund Committee has been further strengthened with the addition of Hugh McGill to its number. A number of eco-seminars, along the lines of the successful 'Building with Straw' seminar held on 19th March, are planned for the coming months. All-in-all there have been some ups and downs, as is normal for a project of this magnitude, but progress has generally been very pleasing, so read on.....

Grant Applications

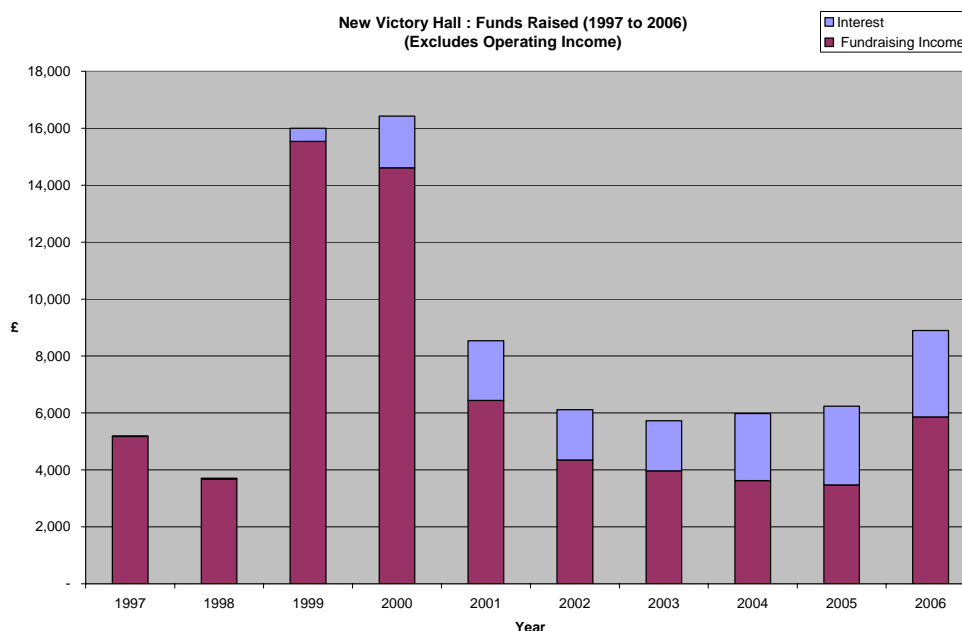
Our Big Lottery Fund application (for £161,000 plus £9,500 in development funds) was submitted on 30th November. The sum requested includes a substantial allowance for contingency and inflation - something that the BLF requires in any application. A telephone interview was conducted with the assessor in late January and this appears to have gone well, although the assessor again reminded us just how strong the competition is for lottery funds. We will hear if we have succeeded in reaching Stage 2 of the application process by early May. In the meantime, we are concurrently applying for more grants whilst preparing the way so that we can move rapidly forward if we reach Stage 2. Norman Lamb MP and local councillors continue to support our cause.

An application for £15,000 was submitted to the Norfolk Rural Community Council (NRCC) in December and they will advise the outcome sometime in May. Indications are that we will probably receive a grant from them but we do not know how big it might be. The Geoffrey Watling Charitable Trust has very kindly awarded us £5,000 and we have so far applied to another 5 charities for smaller grants of up to, typically, £5,000 and yet more applications are planned. We are deliberately spreading out the applications as, quite often, we have a limited period (usually about 12 months) in which to use any funds awarded.

Post Office Update

Discussions with the Post Office about the possibility of a part-time service in the hall have stalled because the only day that the volunteer post-mistress can provide the service locally clashes with other user requirements. The fact that the building cannot easily accommodate simultaneous users for something so simple yet so important only serves as a reminder of why a new building is needed. We continue to explore ways of resolving this matter.

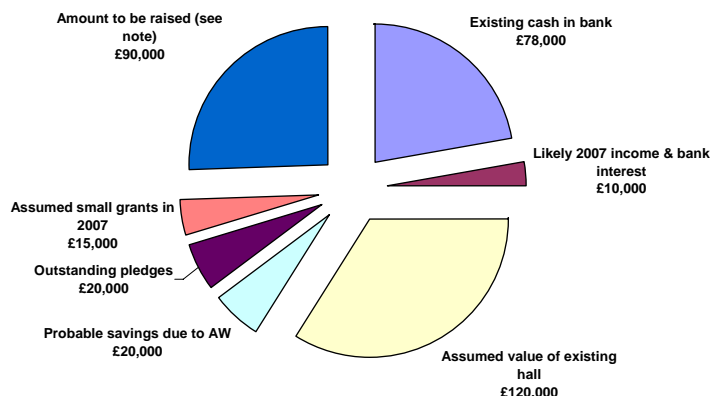
New Building Fund Status



As at March 2007 the New Building Fund stands at almost £80,000. When the £5,000 from Geoffrey Watling Trust plus the £5,000 cash payment due from Anglian Water (for wayleave rights over the new hall land) and the £10,000 promised by a local resident are added then the total cash raised will be very nearly £100,000. This is currently increasing at about £10,000 each year due to extra fund-raising efforts and the ever larger amounts of bank interest being received.

The access road / parking area built by Anglian Water as part of their pumping station project is expected to reduce our construction costs by about £20,000, and the value of the existing hall may well be higher than the £120,000 we have estimated - so we are actually a considerable distance along the path towards the funds needed for the new hall. We believe that, even without a lottery grant, we will need less than £100,000 by the end of this year to achieve our current target of £350,000 (which includes a small allowance for building cost inflation). ***It should be remembered, however, that the target may increase once we have fully assessed the eco design options and the increased space requirements for additional services.*** Inflation and contingencies also need to be considered so we still very much need the lottery grant if we are to deliver an eco-building with additional services.

Summary of Funds Raised and Pledges as of March 2007



Design Review/Architect Selection

At the public meeting of 6th November overwhelming support was given to re-evaluating the design of the hall and, if possible, creating an architecturally significant eco-friendly building. As a consequence of this feedback the Victory Hall Trustees, at their March 2007 meeting, reviewed the proposed design of the replacement hall and agreed revised 'functional specifications', which also incorporate feedback provided by key user groups.

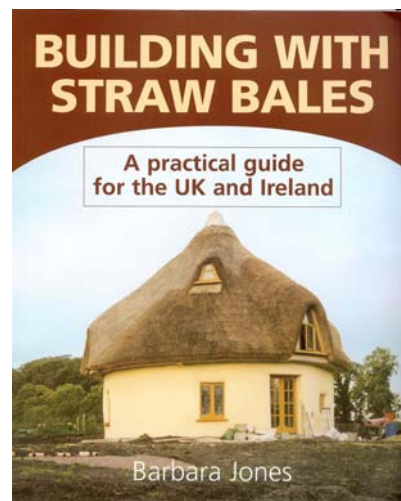
These specifications will, if adopted, allow the new hall to better accommodate the extra services / user groups that we need and aspire to (such as having an information centre, part-time Post Office facility, internet access, concurrent activities etc). Our intention is to invite about 5 firms of architects with proven eco-credentials to submit proposals for designing an eco-friendly new hall. To date, we have discussed ideas with two firms of architects and both have expressed keen interest in being involved in what is, potentially, a very innovative project. We hope to complete the short-list of architects before May. Discussions with the North Norfolk planners are also high on the list of priorities, to ensure that we do our best to gain their support for any changes to the existing planning consent.

If anyone would like to propose the names of any suitable architects for the short-list, or if any user groups would like to have additional input into the design of the hall, then please contact Ian McFadyen on 01692 630150.

Eco Seminar Programme

Concurrent with the changes to the hall design and the short-listing of architects the Trustees have planned a series of short lectures to be held in the Victory Hall. The main objective of the programme is to make people more aware of the different eco-build options that exist, and to explain the advantages and disadvantages of some of these options.

The first of these seminars, entitled 'Building with Straw', was held on 19th March. This was presented by Bee Rowan of Straw Bale Futures Ltd www.strawbalefutures.org.uk. The event was well attended but we would have liked to have seen even more folks there as it was extremely interesting and thought-provoking. By the end of the seminar there was strong support amongst those present for further investigating the possibilities of building the new hall with straw, with kids and adults from the community helping with appropriate phases of construction. The potential exists for creating a superb (and enduring) eco-building out of straw -the architects present at the seminar were very enthusiastic about what we can do - so our investigations will continue. We are now, amongst other steps, planning to talk to farmers (via the local NFU) to identify potential providers of straw and clay.



The next seminar, which should hopefully be just as interesting, is scheduled for 23rd April when Andrew Robertson of Clean Energy Consultancy Ltd will talk about some of the many different options available for providing eco-friendly power and heating for the new hall.

These seminars are important as they will undoubtedly influence the debate about what type of hall we will eventually build. If you want to better understand the options / issues and be fully involved in the debate then you really should make an effort to attend the seminars.

Playgroup

The Playgroup is currently a valued user of the existing hall. However, because of the hall's inadequacies they are investigating the possibility of moving to a portacabin-type building in the grounds of the Neatishead Primary School. At the time of writing, they are still waiting to hear if their planning application has been successful. If the Playgroup does move then it will have an impact on the operating income of the hall, but we are confident that we can replace this lost revenue with income from alternative users / increased services in the new hall, once built.

Website Updates

The Victory Hall website www.victoryhall.org.uk has very recently been updated. It now includes a copy of our application to the BLF and the project schedule that the Trustees are working to. A summary of the financial data from 2006 has also been added, so it is worth taking another look at the site if you would like a fuller update than we can provide in this newsletter.

Forthcoming Victory Hall Fund Raising Events

23rd April 7:30pm Seminar by Andrew Robertson 'Eco-Friendly Power and Heating Options'
16th June Barn Dance

Patrick Palgrave-Moore

On behalf of the New Victory Hall Building Fund Committee