**The Renovation of Lamorna’s Village Hall – an Update from the VH Committee**

No one assumed it would be quick or easy to secure funding for the renovation of our Village Hall and so it is proving. We cannot complain about that as funds are scarce for public and community projects in these uncertain times, including those from the National Lottery, so it is no great surprise that there needs to be a very strong case to win an award. We have worked hard to make such a case and now have to bite our lips nervously until September, when we expect to receive the responses to two funding applications we have just submitted.

At the 2017 AGM it was announced that local architects would be sought to discuss plans for the building and we subsequently appointed Ben White to develop design ideas. This was paid for from existing VH reserves, especially from the Art Auction. Ben’s final design was presented at a consultation event on 8th December last. There has been unanimous support from the community for the plans. It was intended to proceed to a Planning Application, again using existing funds, but a decision was then taken to include this in a funding bid, after advice from Tamsin Daniel, Culture Manager, Cornwall Council, who has given us a lot of help and advice along the way. Having planning permission without the funds in place to do the work would not be of great benefit.

We have explored various funding options, including attendance at three ‘Meet the Funders’ events organised by Transformation Cornwall. There was an encouraging response from the Heritage Lottery Fund and we decided to follow this route. We are not talking about just any village hall, but a building which is part of the Lamorna Valley’s history and heritage and has been at the centre of our community life for more than 130 years.  Local residents might take where they live for granted, but Lamorna attracts visitors from all over the world because of its environment and landscape, its coast and its culture. Lamorna Village Hall is a key part of the local landscape and when reborn its activities will support our community even more effectively and help to promote the local economy.

Because of the complexity of the application process and as we had saved money by not proceeding with the Planning Application, we decided to engage Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC), in the person of Amy Walker, to manage the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This was successfully completed ahead of the deadline of 2nd June. A mass of data had to be assembled to support the bid and this was completed thanks to the IT skills of our Treasurer Bob ‘iCloud’ Anderson. One record required was the amount of voluntary time spent by the VH Committee on the project. After a late start and no doubt being an underestimate as a result, this amounted to more than a thousand hours, or more than £25,000 at a modest professional rate of £25 per hour! This is not just so we can feel smug about how industrious we have been, but its value can be counted as a contribution by us to the funding.

Amy has also completed a second application for us, to the Garfield Weston Foundation, which offers grants to community projects, many of which rely on the time and goodwill of volunteers. This application includes items which can be completed independently of the building work and covers improvements to the carpark; fitting of double glazed windows in the main hall; improvements to lighting and display facilities for art exhibitions and talks; replacement of the old oil boiler with a more efficient external one, which will also free up internal space; telephone and broadband connections and IT equipment for the proposed Lamorna Valley archive.

Along the way we have received many encouraging letters of support for the project from groups, societies and individuals, including Helen Hawkins, the Cornwall Councillor for this Ward and the two Parish Councils representing the Valley. Let’s hope the funders like it just as much!

Away Down to Lamorna!