



March 2024

Dear Priory Hall User

The Priory Hall Management Committee wrote last year outlining the work we had undertaken to improve the facilities and our plans for future improvement. We also asked users for their feedback.

Thank you for being so positive, constructive and realistic in your feedback. Priory Hall is an old building and we have to plan within the constraints that brings. It is also run entirely by a team of 10 volunteers, who make up the trustee board and management committee. Although the committee is occasionally successful in applying for small grants, our main income comes from users and a quick look at the online booking diary will show just how well the Hall is used. We have many loyal, regular users and a growing number of people who turn to the Hall for family parties, including weddings, christenings and funeral gatherings. The Hall is also used for many charity and fund raising events, local group meetings (e.g. Clickers, U3A and WI), council activities and some commercial activities (e.g. sales). The Priory Hall Committee has also organised its own events, including particularly successful CPR and defibrillation training and a "Let's Talk Falls" session. This very healthy level of booking, managed extremely efficiently through our booking secretary and treasurer who use our recently implemented online systems, means our finances are secure.

The Committee has therefore continued to undertake several improvements to the Hall. Users are reporting that the significant improvements to the sound system have been very helpful. We have also updated our personal hygiene facilities which is an important way of making everyone feel welcome and comfortable in the Hall.

We are also very grateful to a new Committee member for his hard work keeping the grounds clear of leaves and weeds. This is a very onerous and time-consuming task needing a (not-so) little-and-often approach and the weather has not helped. We are sure you, and the many visitors to the town who walk up to The Priory, will have noticed the difference; the building looks cared for on the outside as well as the inside. One of our 'friends of the Hall' has already started work filling the baskets and troughs with spring and summer plants. Our thanks to her, and to other 'friends' who water the plants through the summer.

The weather has presented challenges and local tradespeople have begun to tackle the task of clearing and repairing the gutters and making sure the roof is clean and secure so that the Hall does not suffer the problems caused by the increased occurrence of flooding in Much Wenlock.

The Hall is generally valued and very well-looked after by the community but we have recently suffered one incident of vandalism. The small wall that surrounds the steps to the cellar will need to be replaced to make them safe. Of course, this is disappointing and will use up limited funding which could be used on further improvements.

A decision was made to undertake one very significant investment over the last year which we believe users will have noticed. A small working group managed the commissioning of work to fit secondary glazing to the windows. The planning and preparation took a long time, but the work itself was done very efficiently and with little disruption to users. The final effect looks very good; many users are commenting on how cosy and quiet the hall now is and we are beginning to notice the difference in the use (and therefore cost) of our energy. Users can continue to help us by telling our booking secretary if their usual heating setting could now be turned down by a degree or two, or by using the thermostat near the kitchen hatch (NOT the controls on the radiators PLEASE) to turn down the heating.

We hope that some of the smaller and more cosmetic improvements have also been worthwhile. The graphics above the serving hatch, the blackboard and advertising board (used, for example, for our very successful autumn Craft Fair) and the new poster designs all help us to reinforce the Hall's profile as a lively centre of the community.

Of course, there are always outstanding issues. We have not yet been able to improve the catches on the tables (any solutions gratefully received!) but we have not had any further incidents since we improved the signage warning people about them. We will turn our attention to the lighting when we are able to, although users might like to be reminded that there are stand-alone uplighters which can be used to create a more intimate atmosphere.

The Committee continues to discuss the longer term, and expensive, task of improving the flooring. Some users really like the original look of the flooring, others would like it to be improved. The building's age, and exactly what sits underneath the floor, will mean any work will need to be carefully considered and will require additional and significant fundraising. We will keep you posted.

We would welcome any feedback you would like to give us and would be particularly interested to hear from anyone who would like to join the committee or become a 'friend'. Most friends are called on very occasionally, perhaps once or twice a year, to support a particular activity – for example, to help set out tables and chairs or help in the café or on the raffle at the Craft Fair. It is a good way to become involved and to meet new people in Wenlock.

And finally, as a community hall we take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and have recently reviewed our Safeguarding Policy. A copy is attached alongside this letter and you are invited to remind yourself about it. Please feel confident to raise any potential safeguarding concerns with our named lead or directly with the agencies through the contact details given in the policy and on display in the Hall.

With very best wishes for another successful year using our lovely community hall and - as our new logo says - "Bringing the Community Together".

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