



Westleton Village Hall

Registered Charity Number 1026353



Westleton Village Hall - Update on Building Projects

To all people who live in Westleton and all people who use Westleton Village Hall
From Westleton Village Hall Committee
26/07/2010

Friends

We want to bring you all up to date with the project to replace the heaters in the hall. We have found this more difficult than we expected.

Our target was to install heaters that were thermostatically controlled and programmable so we could set them to come on in time for people who had booked the hall and switch off when they had finished. We had found some heaters that would do this and these were the ones we told you about at the meeting we had a couple of years ago.

When we began applying for funds some potential funders insisted, quite reasonably, that we include three quotations with our bid. When we got the additional quotations we found that other companies could install heaters at about half the price, or less, than our initial choice of supplier. The heaters were not all the same but the heaters we had originally chosen were not sufficiently different or "better" to justify the significantly higher cost. Given this situation it was unreasonable of us to continue seeking funding for our first choice.

As we thought about and discussed this project other difficulties presented themselves.

We intended to install heaters at floor level. It became obvious that this would cause significant problems:

There is the risk of damage to the heaters during events and injury to people by contact with hot surfaces. So the heaters would need to be fitted with guards which would add to the cost and be aesthetically unattractive.

The heaters would obstruct wall space; space which is needed for events, such as the exhibition, and for the storage of chairs.

When the hall was full at events such as the Eastern Angles visit, Carol Supper, WI Christmas Supper heat distribution would be poor as chairs and tables would need to be mounted close to the walls to fit everyone in. This would also be very uncomfortable for people who had to sit next to the heaters.

We had also hoped to be able to run the heaters at a low background level (say 10⁰C) to avoid damp and program them to rise to a comfortable level (say 21⁰C) when people came in. This

would not be realistic, the heating up time would be 4 or 5 hours as such heaters need to heat up a large volume of air. If we wanted to do this we would need to set a background temperature of about 17°C to give a heating up time of an hour or so. This would be horrendously expensive as we would be virtually heating the building all the time even though it is sometimes not used for periods of 48 hours or more.

Programming the heating schedule also posed problems. We could program the heating for the regular weekly cycle quite easily. We would, however, have difficulties with the irregular bookings. The heaters would have to be turned on manually either by the users, perhaps an hour or so before they were due to use the hall, or by one of the committee members. Neither option is seen as realistic.

So to use these electric radiators presents problem with location, runs the risk of damage, could injure the users and poses operational difficulties. And our running costs would rise significantly. This is not what we hoped to achieve when we started this project.

Alternative systems we considered were ground or air source heat pumps and woodchip fired systems. The installation cost of these systems would be very high. We would need to install under floor heating. We do not have enough ground space for a ground source system and there would, rightly, be planning issues with any of these approaches - we are a grade 2 listed building in a conservation area. We also worried about the cost of maintaining these complex systems, and finding someone on (or off) the committee who would keep an eye on the system and do simple "user" maintenance.

We considered fan assisted heaters mounted in the ceilings or on the walls. These would give better heat distribution and could be thermostatically controlled. But they pose problems; there would be some background noise which would be a disturbance during talks, concerts or theatrical performances. Fan heaters attract dust and there is the risk of mechanical failure which would add to the noise problem and reduce their performance. So these did not seem attractive.

The advice we have had suggests that there is no ideal solution to our problems. If we were a house or an office, shop or industrial building used all day and every day then things would be easier. But we are a community building used at varying times by a wide range of different people for different purposes and one that is unused for sometimes two or three successive days.

The best advice we have had is to use quartz halogen heaters mounted on the top of the walls. Essentially these are updated versions of what we have now. They offer a rapid heat up time as they do not rely on heating the air but on heating objects (like people) and, unlike our current system, they will be thermostatically controlled. They will also offer better heat distribution than our current units and can be better adjusted to the thermal needs of the rooms. Modern heaters will glow red for the first minute or so, after that the colour will reduce to an "off pink/white" light which will vary in intensity depending on the power being emitted, which is controlled by the temperature controller. This will be better for films and slides.

There is no guarantee that the "hot heads and cold feet" problem will be eliminated, but with

the modern systems it will be reduced. If they are installed at the correct height and positioned correctly (and our supplier assures they will be) and the thermal needs of the rooms are correctly calculated (and our supplier assures they will be) this head/feet problem will be significantly reduced and you will all be a lot more comfortable. We could supplement this heating system, should it prove necessary, with moveable plug-in heaters which will give us low level heat but, as they would be movable, would not result in a loss of wall space. They also would not need to be used in hazardous situations when the heaters or the people could be damaged.

The new heaters will be easier to control and operate than the present units, you will not have to keep turning them on and off whilst you are using the hall as is currently the case. As the heaters are more efficient and better calculated to meet the thermal needs of the rooms we will need fewer of them so the running costs will be reduced.

So there is no ideal solution to the heating problem in the hall. What we intend to do does seem to represent the best option and we are confident there will be a considerable improvement on what we have now. We have placed an order for the system today.

We now have double glazing in place and the ceilings are insulated. The installation of these new controlled heaters should offer a considerable improvement to all of you who use the hall and will reduce our energy costs.

Westleton Village Hall Committee
26/07/2010