

A Community Hub for Gilling East Business Plan

This business plan describes the growing need to provide a community hub to facilitate activities within Gilling East and its associated hamlets (Cawton, Coulton and Grimston) and sets out the way in which these can be met over the next five years. Achievement of the plan objectives will promote health, well being, intergenerational activity and social cohesion and thereby engage and strengthen the local community.

Introduction

Gilling East is in Ryedale north of York and south of Helmsley. The village and its associated hamlets (Cawton, Coulton and Grimston) with a combined population of approximately 500 originally served the local agricultural need but are more recently residential with a combination of working families and retired people. Their proximity to Ampleforth (the Abbey School) has a bearing on employment. The age spectrum, based on 2001 census data for the ward of Ampleforth shows a significant proportion of younger residents with 12 to 18 year-olds forming the majority.

Table 1 – Age group numbers* calculated from the Ampleforth Ward census data for 2001

	Aged 1-3	Aged 4-11	Aged 12-18	Aged 19-30	Aged 31-50	Aged 51-64	Aged 65 plus
Gilling	6	25	78	17	59	45	42
Cawton	1	5	14	3	11	8	8
Grimston	2	6	20	4	15	12	11
Coulton	2	7	23	5	17	13	12
Total	10	43	135	30	103	78	73

*proportionate projections based on village population breakdown – census data may include children from St Martin's Ampleforth school.

Within the last five years we believe that the population age profile has changed such that there are currently significantly more younger families with children. Estimates suggest there are more than 70 children resident in the catchment area, with more than 50% older than twelve and 27% between the age of four and eleven.

Rural deprivation is a very real issue in our area with no stimulus for community activity and self help. Our villages have no school where parents would be drawn

together, no shop or Post Office for local gossip and the former village pub has a busy restaurant leaving little space for a pint and a chat. The churches within the village provide some opportunity for gathering, but inevitably this is limited. The increasing numbers of young children in the villages have nowhere to play or interact; there is no facility for teenage activity. Our village needs somewhere for people to meet, a community hub.

Neighbouring villages have village halls (Brandsby, Coxwold, Ampleforth, Hovingham and others) and whilst these offer some activities of value to Gilling residents, they do not encourage village focus and attendance involves travelling, made difficult for many by infrequent or unavailable public transport. The nearest larger market towns are Helmsley and Easingwold, both also too far to travel for many purposes.

We therefore propose to remedy this situation by providing a community hub which will make provision for local activities (listed below) and encourage greater community cohesion. Our intent is to repair, refurbish and equip the former village school building to provide both indoor and outdoor activity opportunities. The school closed some years ago, and the 'ownership' of the building was uncertain for many years. Built originally by public subscription on land provided by a local benefactor who has long since moved away, the building has been used only sporadically in recent years. Some of the surrounding grounds have been used by the Ryedale Society of Model Engineers, and parish and other meetings were sometimes held in the building. After many years of investigation and frustration, the issue of ownership has been resolved and complicating legal obstacles have been overcome. The old school is now owned by the local church who wishes it to be used as a community facility. A management committee has been formed, has gained charitable status (charity number 1118724) and a 35 year lease at a peppercorn rent has been agreed. At last a start can be made on development of the building to serve as a community hub for villagers' use.

To maximise the potential for a variety of village activities, plans have been drawn-up to upgrade the building to provide a robust structure with sustainable, fit-for-purpose heating and insulation and modern internal toilet facilities (including disabled toilet). The large hall will allow indoor sports as well as larger gatherings and drama events, and there will be a smaller room for meetings and office facilities. The existing kitchen will be upgraded to support these activities and provide for more ambitious catering as appropriate. Outside, the former school field is still retained so that a children's play area and a modest sports field are planned. The committee proposes to raise funds and to seek grants to undertake the necessary work over the coming years to bring about these changes.

Additionally, the school building has architectural significance. It was designed by the well-known local architect Walter Brierley and survives as a good example

of his skill. The committee does not propose to change the external appearance of the building, hoping to preserve it as a good example of his ability to design functional yet attractive buildings which are in keeping with their surroundings. The plan envisages a cost-effective conversion with sustainability a main concern. The building may also serve as an archive for both architectural and local interests.

Objectives

The objectives which this business plan addresses are the formation of a hall to serve as a community 'hub' to facilitate a variety of activities for the people of Gilling East and its associated parishes. These activities will promote the health, well being, intergenerational activity and social cohesion of the local community. The activities listed below are those identified by the villagers themselves in a number of ways as follows:

Through the completion of a questionnaire:

A questionnaire, circulated within the catchment area (by personal delivery, inclusion in the Parish magazine and on the web site) elicited responses from approximately a third of households (36%). Most respondent households were of more than one occupant (92%). Eleven percent of households had children younger than five, 25% had children 5 to ten and 28% had teenage children. Most respondents (83%) had lived in the catchment area for more than five years. Of activities offered for choice, the most popular were those which emphasised the social rather than the individual preference e.g. the most popular choices were adult parties, dances and keep fit (58, 36 and 58% of choices respectively). The other popular choice was the provision of adult education (61%). Active sports such as badminton, keep fit and table tennis were often preferred but yoga was also chosen. The provision of a Youth Club was a common choice.

Through discussions at public meetings and with committee representatives and feedback from our web site (www.gillingeastvillagehall.org):

Several public meetings have been held over recent months and years. These have taken a variety of forms including annual general meetings of the management committee and meetings specifically to launch the refurbishment concept and elicit community support. These have been increasingly well attended as awareness of the refurbishment initiative increased and the feasibility of use of the hall became more likely with repairs to the building fabric. In all such meetings there has been a marked enthusiasm for the creation of a community focus and there has clearly been a collective wish to find a

means of coming together socially. The community hub concept has grown from this very evident need.

We anticipate and have feedback that the provision of a community hub will promote the following activities:

1. Young people - in recent years there has been an influx of families with children. We hope to provide a playground for younger children and some sports facilities for older children. A youth committee and a youth club are also planned. The Hall would provide a good venue for playgroups or toddler groups. A child protection policy is already formulated.
2. Catering facilities will provide for general and private functions - parties, receptions etc. Participants in children's parties could, by agreement with the Railway Society, be given rides on the miniature railway.
3. Older people – with little or no public transport, the substantial number of retired people in the locality are isolated. We would hope to have day-time opening of the hall at various times during the week including provision for community lunches and entertainment. Equipment for older people could perhaps be included in the playground.
4. Sport - a badminton court is an easily provided resource inside the building, as are table sports. Outside a small playing field will be provided.
5. Education - the new space will provide opportunities for continuing education locally, U3A etc.
6. Entertainment - a stage for musical and dramatic performances and a screen and projector for films is included in plans.
7. The arts - the hall will provide a venue for art classes, exhibitions, craft fairs etc.
8. Heritage - the building itself is part of our heritage and could house an archive of local history - thus an ideal venue for the study of local history.
9. Green issues - we propose that the Hall will be an energy efficient building and an example to be followed.
10. Services - there is a possibility that the Hall might be able to provide a limited-time coffee bar, shop, post office, local computing services etc.
11. Committee room - in time a smaller room suitable for Parish Council Meetings, committee meetings, small classes etc. will be available. This could be hired separately from the main Hall.

12. Disablement – there will be wheelchair access to all parts of the ground floor and disablement provision in the indoor toilets.

How do we propose to achieve our objectives?

A hall is to be created and equipped to provide a community hub to serve as the centre for both the indoor and outdoor activities listed above. The hall will be housed within the former school building by repairing and refurbishing it and providing suitable equipment for the activities. Over a four to five year period this business plan proposes a staged progression of repairs, refurbishment and internal structural changes coupled with outdoor provisions as set out below. The plans have been drawn up after consultation with an architect (one with particular sympathy for Walter Brierley buildings), a quantity surveyor and consultants advice has been taken with respect to energy efficiency. Local builders have assessed feasibility. Provision has been made in the plans to take account of disability concerns and of the Health and Safety issues inherent in the building, but also in respect of its operation outdoors and in relation to the existence of the Ryedale Model Engineering Society operations on the same site. Especial concern is to be taken to ensure the sustainable operation of the hall in the longer term. Advice on energy efficiency includes attention to insulation with a significant upgrade planned and the possibility of using a ground source heat pump. As the plan for changes progresses, the various activities will be promoted and nurtured. A plan for the running of the hall, once established, has been drawn up and will be revised as necessary in successive years. Long term audit and oversight of the operation of the hall is proposed using a separate group of ‘friends of Gilling Village Hall’.

The project elements of the plan and their staging throughout a five year period are presented below:

So far as is presently possible, account has been taken both of the availability of funding and the dependencies of one project on another in staging the project elements.

Table 2 – Project elements, their staging and who will do the work.

Project element	Date of completion	Work to be done by
Underpinning – repair of window arch	Already completed	Contractor and self help
Temporary kitchen	Already completed	Self help
General repairs		
a) roof repair and rainwater goods	Jan – Jun 2009	Contractor and self help
b) repair window frames	Summer 2009	Contractor
c) demolish leaning chimney	When resources	Contractor

d) pointing masonry	permit	Contractor
Wiring – basic circuits	April 2009	Contractor
Wall and roof insulation, secondary glazing	Apr – Sept 2009	Contractor and self help
Internal painting	Jun 2009	Self help
Trenches, ground-source heat pump & pipes, Under floor heating, flooring	July – Sept 2009	Contractor and self help
Playground	Aug - Dec 2009	Contractor and Self help
External painting	July 2009	Self help plus contractor
Car parking	Jan – Jun 2010	Self help
New toilets, shower and changing area, drains	Jan – Mar 2010	Contractor
New kitchen	Jan – Mar 2010	Contractor and self help
Store room	Jan – Feb 2011	Contractor
Mezzanine, meeting room/office – Incl. Secondary glazing & Under floor heating	Mar – Jun 2011	Contractor
Complete electrical work – Emergency lighting, smoke alarms, new lights etc.	Summer 2011	Contractor
Equipment purchase	(as needed)	

Health and safety during the project and on its completion are ongoing concerns. Risk assessments and action plans at each relevant stage of the work are projected and a committee member has specific responsibility for this important element of the plan.

The Cost

Costs, based on the advice of a quantity surveyor, have been drawn up using the architect's interpretation of the committee's proposals and are presented below. These are provisional as projects are interdependent and notwithstanding the information presented in table 2, it will not be clear until the work begins how much can be done without professional help. Additionally, costs relating to heating and energy efficiency may change according to feasibility studies and advice yet to be obtained, in particular, the possibility of using a ground source heat pump needs further investigation before commitment can be made. Cost increases due to inflation are to be built in.

Table 3 – the cost of the project elements

Project element	Date of completion	Estimated cost
Underpinning – repair of	Already completed	£7,500 (incl. VAT)

window arch		
Temporary kitchen	Already completed	£200 (under budget)
General repairs		
a) roof repair and rainwater goods	Jan – Jun 2009	£6,000
b) repair window frames	Summer 2009	£2,000
c) demolish leaning chimney	When resources permit	£1,750
d) pointing masonry		£1,000
Wiring – basic circuits	April 2009	£5,000
Wall and roof insulation, secondary glazing	Apr – Sept 2009	£5,250
Internal painting	Jun 2009	£1,000
Trenches, ground-source heat pump & pipes, Under floor heating, flooring	July – Sept 2009	£17,500
Playground	Aug - Dec 2009	£5,000
External painting	July 2009	£2,000
Car parking	Jan – Jun 2010	£500
New toilets, shower and changing area, drains	Jan – Mar 2010	£8,000
New kitchen	Jan – Mar 2010	£2,500
Store room	Jan – Feb 2011	£2,000
Mezzanine, meeting room/office – Incl. Secondary glazing & Under floor heating	Mar – Jun 2011	£19,000
Complete electrical work – Emergency lighting, smoke alarms, new lights etc.	Summer 2011	£10,000
Total so far		£96,150
Contingencies 10%		£9,615
Professional fees		£14,000
Equipment purchase	(as needed)	£15,000
VAT on repairs		£1,612.50
TOTAL		£136,377.50

How do we propose to fund the work?

We anticipate a four pronged strategy as follows:

1. We will attempt to **undertake work ourselves** (see above), focussing on those tasks which lie within our expertise and giving priority to those improvements which make the building usable (if not fully to expected standard at first) so that we can generate income from hiring during the refurbishment process.

2. We will (continue) to undertake **fund raising** – and will promote the use of the hall to generate revenue from its **hire**.
3. We will **appeal to individuals and corporate bodies** for donations or loans.
4. We will seek **grant aid** from as many sources as necessary.

Conclusion

This business plan sets out the means to create a community hub to promote the facilitation of a variety of activities for the people of Gilling East and its associated hamlets so as to promote the health, well being, intergenerational activity, social cohesion and self sufficiency of the local community. The plan proposes a cost efficient conversion of an existing and little-used building to provide a hall to serve as the centre for village focus as well as to house the activities. The plan serves also to preserve a building of significant local architectural interest. The plan sets out a staged conversion ensuring maximum take up of activities as soon as facilities allow and providing for a progressive funding stream. Maximum use is made of self help so as to engage villagers themselves from an early stage and to minimise costs and, insofar as is possible, advantage will be taken of sustainable eco-friendly principles. The plan is modest in scope ensuring that once completed the hall and especially the activities it houses are sustainable at minimal cost to those involved.

A fuller version of this business plan can be obtained from a member of the committee if required.