

WIDECOMBE CHURCH HOUSE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
FOR NEW HALL FEASABILITY STUDY

DEMAND FOR FACILITIES

The Management Committee have become aware that with the increasing demands and expectations of the public and the authorities i.e EHO, Health and Safety, OFSTED and others, that there are several areas of inadequacy in the Church House particularly as a suitable venue for the pre-school and for certain public events.

In recent years improvements have been made to the toilet area and currently there is an ongoing project to improve the lighting in the downstairs hall. The first phase has been completed by installing LED bulbs in the wall brackets. This has already proved to make a difference. The second phase is to install bulkhead style lights, also LED, between some of the beams thereby creating better overall coverage of the area. This should be completed by the beginning of June.

The committee have been in discussion with the NT regarding disabled access to the upstairs hall. Due to the restrictions imposed on a listed and historic building such as The Church House, this would not be possible. Disabled access is obviously of great importance. There are several groups who meet regularly who have people who would like to attend but cannot as they have mobility problems and cannot manage the stone steps.

The committee has also considered the possibility of improving the heating downstairs. Again, due to the nature of the building, the amount of alterations that would need to be undertaken to make it draught proof and less damp was thought not be a viable proposition. The windows and the stone floor are of historic value.

This lack of adequate heating and the dampness in this area are of concern to many.

There is very limited parking close to the hall although the Church car park (Bell Ringers car park) is available for use by anyone involved in Church House activities.

The NT are the owners of this building and therefore any major alterations would need and not necessarily get their approval.

There are also many limitations imposed by other bodies e.g Historic Buildings and the DNPA.

## FUTURE REVENUE AND MANAGEMENT

We would like to emphasise that the Church House Management committee are fully behind the project for the new hall for the village. They are aware of several unsurmountable inadequacies in the nature of this building for many activities needed for the modern day and the demands of the future

We have commitments from the weekly craft market (May – October) and the monthly produce market (March – December ) who will carry on in the Church House as they see it as a more suitable venue, due to the atmosphere created by the historic nature of the building and its position in the centre of the village.

Currently the combined income from both these events adequately covers the rent paid to the NT. The National Trust have indicated that they are happy for Church House to continue to be a community building serving Widecombe.

In recent times there have been events such as a memorial service and a wedding party held in the hall. This venue was chosen specifically because of the character and atmosphere of the building. We feel sure that this kind of demand will always be there.

There are also certain events that are directly related to the Church. The bell ringers competition held annually for which CH is hired for the judges and for refreshments for the visiting teams. This would continue to be the case.

Other such Church related events also happen periodically, such as pre and post wedding cream teas and receptions.

Having improved the lighting downstairs the ground floor hall should also be a more suitable venue for certain kinds of exhibitions suited to an older venue.

In future, should the new hall be realised, without the presence of the pre-school The Church House would be more available for NT members to visit and would open up more space for others to use as possible exhibition areas. We also anticipate that some of the running costs would decrease if the pre-school were to be relocated to the new hall.

The CHMC is confident that in the short term it will financially be viable to continue to keep the CH running even if other local groups move their meeting/ activities to the new hall.

They are aware that in the long term they will need actively to promote CH as a venue for events that would be more suited to an historic building and its proximity to the Church.

They do not anticipate that this will be too much of a problem.