

UPDATE FROM THE BARLOW CHAIR OF TRUSTEES 8TH DECEMBER 2018

I am writing to you all to give you another update before Christmas on how things are progressing at the Barlow. In November we had our busiest time yet, hosting 12 major events as well as all the regular activities and raising over £7,000 in volunteer-led activity. Again, a great achievement. The Trustees wish to express their continuing gratitude to everyone for their hard work and dedication.

The Reading Room Coffee Shop

The Steering Group have now made their report to the Trustees regarding the last three months of operation of the new and revamped Reading Room coffee shop. The Trustees want to take this opportunity to thank the group for their huge contribution to the developing success of the coffee shop. We have had some great feedback about the atmosphere, the menu (especially the soups!) and the general friendliness of our young staff. Having discussed the report with the coffee shop volunteer managers, the Trustees have decided that the coffee shop should have a capital budget to support its development over the next 6-8 months when there will be a further review.

Funding

We have approached the Parish Council regarding a possible raise in the Precept (a levy on tax payers in the parish) to help the Barlow. The Parish Council have agreed to consider it after we have provided quotations for the roof repair/replacement. That process is ongoing and being led by Mike King. Meanwhile we have had emergency repairs done to the roof. These were successfully completed some weeks ago. Our local Councillor (and Treasurer) Colin Rigby will be approaching Blackburn with Darwen to investigate the possibility of a public works loan. Meanwhile, we have been making first approaches to other agencies/organisations to see if there is a fit between the Barlow and their activities.

New Trustees

We have two new Trustees: Peter Russell lives in Edgworth and is a stalwart of the Bowling Club. He brings a great deal of legal and corporate experience to the Board. We also welcome Lynn Jeffries, the final nomination to the Board by the Parish Council. She is an accountant and her experience and advice will be invaluable to us.

Barlow Constitution/Legal Liability Steering Group

You will remember that a working group was set up after the AGM to investigate legal entities and their implications for the future development of the Barlow. The proposal by the former Trustees for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) was rejected at the AGM. The Steering Group has now reported to the Trustees and has given them a presentation of their findings. Again our thanks for the work done by the group and the clarity of their report. We will soon be setting out a consultation period for everyone to have their say about the options available. To that end, we will be publishing the recommendations of the Steering Group's report on the website shortly.

Friends of the Barlow

In November, the Barlow hosted an afternoon and evening event to welcome the Friends of the Barlow and express the Charity's gratitude for their continuing support. Mike King gave a short speech of thanks outlining the background to the founding of the Friends and the Chair set out a brief overview of what the Trustees still have to do and how we are moving forward.

Out of that event there emerged a number of initiatives: to recruit more Friends; to keep the Friends informed regularly of progress at the Barlow and to encourage the Friends to identify small capital projects which they might fund.

Meanwhile, Martin Smith will be the 'go-to' Trustee for the Friends and Linda Spencer will continue with the administration. If you would like to find out more about the Friends contact Linda at linda@thebarlow.co.uk or 01204 853638.

This year, the Barlow is beautifully decorated for Christmas to reflect a very full and impressive schedule of events. I hope you will find time to join in and enjoy everything you attend.

Meanwhile I wish to thank all our volunteers and supporters for all they have done to support the Trustees since August. It is so much appreciated.

May I also take this opportunity to wish you all a very peaceful and happy Christmas.

Christine Waring
Chair of the Trustees