

UPDATE FROM THE BARLOW CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Here is another update on what is happening in the Barlow. In the first quarter of this year (January-March) a surplus of £6,883 was generated. As always, the Trustees wish to express their continuing gratitude to the volunteers.

The Reading Room Coffee Shop

- The Reading Room continues to be a vibrant meeting place and hub of the Barlow. It will be open over Easter. I am sorry to tell you that our Coffee Shop manager Joyce Danks has decided to step down. She has done a sterling job since September in getting the Reading Room off the floor and has been instrumental in making it the friendly and welcoming place it is. The Trustees wish to express their thanks to Joyce and to the Reading Room Steering Group. The Steering Group have given unstinting support since September when it was formed to keep the Coffee Shop going. The Coffee Shop has benefited greatly from their dedicated work, often in the face of very trying and challenging circumstances. The Trustees are now in the process of recruiting a replacement for Joyce and hope to appoint after Easter.

Financial Strategy for the Barlow Refurbishment

To secure the sustainability of the Barlow over the next 50 years our strategy is threefold

1. Seek a public works loan of £200,000 from Blackburn with Darwen in concert with the Parish Council. We have approval in principle from Blackburn and confirmation of the feasibility and legality of raising the money through the Parish Council. We need to enter into serious discussions with them over the coming months.
2. Put in bids to external funders: Veolia, Viridor, Tudor Trust and HLF. We will be reactivating the bid to Heritage Lottery Fund made by the previous Trustees, but with a much reduced scope. Our focus will be on the Building and its sustainability.
3. Use our reserve funds. We have £285,000 in reserves: some of this will be used for match funding; (about £100,000); some will be used as a capital contribution to the building work.

This is a threefold strategy. It is the case that we cannot embark on the roof refurbishment project without all three of these initiatives being successful.

Bidding for Funding

We appointed *Proffitts: Investing in Communities* to make preliminary bids to selected funders over the next three months. We have reached Stage 2 with our bid to Viridor (for £50,000) and Veolia (£100,000). We plan to approach Tudor trust for £150,000 and Heritage Lottery Fund for £500,000. As part of the preparation for the bids, we held a public consultation on Saturday 13th April to raise the consciousness of the village about the state of the Barlow building and to elicit expressions of support which we can show to funders. This was a great success.

The photo displays and the drone survey of the state of the building were revealing and alarming. We felt we ought to have issued hard hats! Our thanks to Steve Danks, Linda Spencer, Nikki Barlow, Mike King and Phil Grundy for bringing it all together. Thanks also to John Drogan who provided the drone footage. You can see the drone footage on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/mgfYkH36z0Y>

Other Barlow Fund Raising in 2019

We will shortly be launching a 2019 campaign to raise funds for the Barlow through a series of 'Barlow Benefit' events. One is the Fun Day on 9th June for which planning is already advanced. Other events are at the planning stage but are likely to involve local musicians who will donate their services to the Barlow. We also are planning a visit from Ruth Padel, our Honorary President. She will be giving a poetry reading in July.

Update on the artificial pitch proposal from the Cricket Club

The Cricket Club held their public consultation regarding the proposed artificial pitch on 23rd February. The results of this have already been published on our website and theirs. The Trustees have written to the funders of the artificial pitch to seek terms and conditions of the donation. We have had an informal email response and some further detail from Jon Crompton acting on behalf of the donors. The Board will be discussing the matter at upcoming meetings.

Barlow Constitution/Limited 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 group's report and its recommendations have informed the questions the Trustees have been asking of our financial and legal advisors. We have now received advice and will be discussing the next steps regarding publication and consultation.

The Woodland

Good news about the woodland behind the Barlow. Those of you who walk there regularly will know how overgrown and in need of management it is. One of our village residents, James Geddes, has very kindly offered to get a working party together to make a start on tidying up the woodland. He has set in motion negotiations with the Probation Service and Myerscough College to help with this. We are very grateful to James for his efforts. We will publish progress on the website.

The Snooker Room

Thanks to Mick Hall and Jon Kilroy, both keen snooker players and supporters of the Barlow, we now have a recovered (and re-covered) snooker table. What a transformation! Mick and friends have arranged and paid for the refurbishment themselves, for which we are very grateful indeed. It looks fantastic and we hope will encourage more snooker enthusiasts and even get a club going! The room will now be locked when not in use to protect the table from damage. All we need is for the room to be made watertight when the roof is replaced!

AGM

At the time of writing and date for the AGM has not been set. As soon as the accountant can confirm when she has prepared the accounts we will confirm a date and time.

Christine Waring
Chair of the Trustees
15TH April 2019