

Statement from BCHT Chair

After many years of planning with local groups and societies, of campaigning and fundraising, we are finally at the point where Phase 1 of building a new village hall for Buxted can begin.

The full history of how we have reached this stage of the project is available to read on the Buxted Parish Council website. After input and representation from many different interest groups, The Buxted Community Hall Trust is the group that was formed in April 2011 to take the project forward to completion.

The Phase 1 work will not only start the ball rolling towards the completion of a 21st century facility for the village, but will also have a positive benefit in several respects for the Ionides Trust land. It will involve realigning the access path, providing a proper crossover access and completing part of the footings. It is essential to begin this Phase 1 now to ensure that the time-limited Outline Planning Permission granted in December 2014 is secured indefinitely. The majority of the funds used for these and recent works has been/will be paid for from Section 106 Developer money that was assigned for the building of a new village hall. These funds can only be used for their designated purpose, none other. If not spent on the new village hall they would have to be returned to WDC and thence to the developer. The parish council holds these funds, as required by WDC, and make the payments as advised by BCHT. While inevitably there may be some disruption to vehicle access during the works, we hope that this will be kept to a minimum by liaising closely with all users who may be affected. Once the Phase 1 work is completed the land will be restored to an open usable space for all.

Phase 2 of the project will involve the major ground works, car park and the building of the hall itself. The current estimate by the Quantity Surveyor and Architect for the total works (including Phase 1, and Fees and VAT where applicable) is £1.3M. To this end a major fundraising effort will begin in the New Year and any help, support or donations would be greatly appreciated!

The planned main hall is an increased size and better designed use of space. This will offer a much more flexible space. Reasonable storage provision has been carefully incorporated into the design of the building. It will also have the benefit of its own car park. Although it will not have a fixed stage, it will be able to accommodate a dismountable stage for theatrical productions, linking the smaller room adjacent to the main hall when required and opening the folding doors to maximize the space.

The Scouts Group have always wanted to keep their independence with their historic Scout hut, quite understandably given the nature of storing their equipment and the flexibility of use for all their activities. Of course, they will also be very welcome to use the new facility when it is completed.

In accordance with the declared objects of the Buxted Community Hall Trust's charitable company's registration with the Charity Commissioners, the new hall will be for the use of all the inhabitants of the parish of Buxted and its vicinity, without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, including use for early years' education, meetings, lectures and classes, and other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation – also offering a community café and gallery space and, with improvements to the surrounding land, provide an integrated and usable outside space.

**Sheila Bartholomew
Chair**

**Buxted Community Hall Trust
09 October 2017**