

Public Hall Refurbishment project – update

Earlier this year, to better understand current usage of the Public Hall and how this could be improved, we carried out a consultation exercise, involving paper questionnaires in all rooms in the Public Hall for users to complete (also handed out at the Community Fair), together with an electronic version available via Survey Monkey. The consultation was widely publicised in the local press, on our website and via social media, and achieved 77 responses.

Survey findings showed that overall 88% of respondents supported a refurbishment project. When asked 'What changes would most improve the Public Hall?', from a list of 9 possible options, the most popular response was 'Lifts to all floors' which was supported by 67% of respondents. Furthermore, in response to the question 'What do you think limits its use?' 61% of people replied with issues relating to difficulties with access.

When looking to seek grant funding to assist with the Public Hall refurbishment project, it was found that there were two sources of possible large grants, but in each case, there would be difficulties in proceeding with a successful application:

Landfill Community Grants

These grants all require a Contributing Third Party payment (approx. 10 – 11%) which cannot be paid by the applicant organisation or another Landfill grant. With many village hall projects this is often achieved by community fundraising.

Big Lottery Fund

The Reaching Communities Buildings fund closed earlier this year, however it is still possible to fund up to £100,000 for a capital project via the Reaching Communities general fund. No more than 25% of the project must relate to providing improved access. Having spoken at length to them, they are aware that we have 3 community facilities here in Liskeard all looking for funding, and would only consider supporting one in any area. They would need to see that the operators are working together to each provide distinct facilities, rather than competing with each other and providing similar services for the community. They also favour an approach where a small grant is initially secured (up to £10,000) to commission a feasibility study with public consultation, to inform the main project – the Liskerrett Centre have been undertaking this. The basic application process would take about 10 months, with a further minimum 4 months for the feasibility study.

In both cases grant budgets are shrinking, and the process is therefore far more competitive. Grant funders are favouring projects which in some way incorporate new and innovative ideas.