

Early in 2023 we started to make plans for the outside area behind the village hall and, in collaboration with Enterprise Badingham, we were successful in gaining a “Field to Fork” grant from East Suffolk Council which supported the development of the herb garden. The ground works were completed in September 2023 and this year we have seen the planters built and stocked and development of the whole area. The Lottery Grant we received has helped us to provide tables and parasols and about 25 volunteers helped over the year. We also had a donation of plants from a local grower and Kindlewood provided the woodchip to use for mulching. We are intending to add grids to the shingle base to make access easier in future. A launch event was held in June to “open” the garden and publicise the first of four village recipe books. 40 people attended a lovely evening with music from village resident Steve Callis. The herbs have been well used by local people over the summer and the second recipe book produced. The next one will include recipes from village chefs.

The most significant problem we had in the autumn was the failure of our heating system and Charles, together with a village volunteer, installed a new boiler. We now have remote Hive control so we can set the heating from home to match hall bookings each week. They also overhauled the central heating system and this is much more efficient with hot water getting to all radiators. Enterprise Badingham and East Suffolk Council contributed to the costs. The Lottery Grant will pay the balance.

Following the Quiz night in January 2024 there was a torrential downpour after several weeks of wet weather. This led to flooding in Low Street and water poured off the fields behind the hall. It collected by the main entrance and seeped under the door. This caused the floor in the main hall to lift and become dangerous as a trip hazard. We were successful with an insurance claim and the damaged floor has now been replaced.

The flooding meant that we had limited use of the hall for several months whilst the insurers removed, surveyed and dried the floor area before replacing it. We had several successful events earlier in the year including Malcolm’s talk on “A lifetime in the Law”, the Winter Market (in partnership with the Community Café), a wine tasting evening, a ceilidh and music night. In addition, there have been regular events like Kurling and activities supported by BCC like the Bingo and Quiz nights. We have also provided a base for home – school tuition organised by Lapwing Education. We have tried to attract regular adult classes without success.

Regular maintenance has continued and we have worked hard to keep costs down. Outside space has been kept tidy by volunteers, the hedges which had become overgrown were trimmed by Kindlewood, gutters, roofs and drains are checked regularly and caretaking has been overseen by Sally until recently when Maria Cairns took over.

Safety checks have all been carried out to cover fire extinguishers and fire alarms. The building electrics 5-year testing has now been carried out using Lottery funding and PAT tests on all equipment will be completed very soon.

The Lottery Grant was to contribute to the replacement of the heating system and other items to ensure the hall was up to speed and able to act as an effective community hub. We will need to make final decisions about which budget items to set against this grant over the next few weeks. It can include repairing the heating system and utility bills, tables and seating, safety equipment and tests and possibly one or two other projects.

The committee has worked hard to keep the hall running effectively and maintain an effective balance of income and expenditure. By the time the Lottery Grant is used we should have a balance of around £5,000 to take us into 2025.