Tolpuddle Village Hall
Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
(Charity No: 1195647)

Tolpuddle Village Hall
(Charity No: 257403)

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2025-26

Introduction

On behalf of the trustees of the above two charities[1] currently responsible for Tolpuddle Village Hall, I present below a report and the accounts for the financial year 2025-26.

The objects of the two charities, which are almost identical, are appended to this report. In brief, the Trustees are charged with the provision and maintenance of a village hall for the leisure and other benefit of the people of Tolpuddle. Their legal duty is always to act in a way that is most likely to further the purposes of the charity and they have powers to do anything that is calculated to further this object.

Highlights from the Year

- Continued healthy usage by local and community groups including for toddlers, pilates, yoga and table tennis, plus other repeat bookings and one-off hires by people within and outside the community.

- Various events for the benefit of the community and to help raise funds – for example, the harvest supper, "quiz and chips" night.

- Valuable income from those visiting the Martyrs Festival in 2025 from catering put on by the village for the benefit of the Hall and St Johns Church.

- As a result, a sound financial performance which, despite increasingly heavy electricity costs in the winter months, has allowed us to carry out various works required following fire and electrical reviews.

- Redemption of a £20,000 loan taken out in 2017 to enable completion of the modernisation works carried out at that time.

Hall Usage

[1] In 2021, a new charity (a charitable incorporated organisation which is now the recommended charitable model for village halls) was set up to run the Hall. However, the land and building remain in the ownership of the existing charity until the process of transferring them to the new charity can be completed.

The Hall has regular users most days of the week, Friday and Saturday being the main exceptions, though they are sometimes booked then for one off events.

There are two local pilates groups, a yoga class, a toddlers group and a table tennis group. On Sundays, a Southampton-based church holds services mainly for medical personnel based in Dorchester. During the year there were several music events and the Hall continues to be in demand for private parties and events, including a Christmas party for children and Christmas Fair. The Puddletown Area Parish Council meets at the Hall six times a year; the annual parish meeting takes place there; and the Martyrs Inn holds its shareholders meetings at the Hall.

Along with the Martyrs Inn and the Church, the Hall plays a significant role in village life, in line with the object of the charities that run it.

Hall Finances

The Accounts for 2025-26 are attached.

The business plan is based on:

- prioritising community use and keeping charges for the community as low as possible, while seeking "commercial" business when the Hall is free;

- ensuring all activities at the Hall make some contribution to it's upkeep, whether through hire charges, voluntary donations or a share of surpluses from events;

- investing when we can to maintain the Hall as a modern, well-presented and well-equipped facility for multiple uses.

For many years, user charges have been kept simple – an hourly fee with a 50% discount for non income earning community users and a one-off fee per hire for full use of the kitchen facilities (including the range and commercial dishwasher). In January 2026, the hourly fee went up by £1 to £17 (ie £8.50 for community groups), a small but necessary increase given electricity costs. The fee for use of the full kitchen remained at £25.

The accounts show a small profit (around £2,000) for the year. As a result, the Trustees have been able to continue the practice of keeping a reserve of up to £10,000 as a buffer against emergencies, loss of income and/or essential maintenance and improvements, while maintaining a balance around £5,000 to cover monthly expenses.

On a total turnover of nearly £23,000, net income in 2025-26 was just over £17,500 comprising hire charges, donations, the 100 Club (a monthly lottery), fund-raising events and sales during the Martyrs Festival in July each year. Hire charge income remains a mainstay, covering this year some 90% of our administrative expenses. But we also rely heavily on other sources. The Martyrs Festival over a weekend in July each year can make a significant difference to our bottom line though it involves a lot of work for many in the village in preparing and serving lunch at the Hall on the Sunday and cooking breakfasts on

the Festival site over the whole weekend. We split the surplus with St Johns Church and this year our share was a little over £2,000.

On the expenditure side, electricity charges remain the biggest challenge to our annual running costs. In 2025-26, they amounted to £5,500, some 37% of administrative expenses. The Hall has no other energy source and its Victorian school design, with a high open roof internally, means that space heating is difficult and expensive. Over the years we have taken steps to manage our electricity costs and regularly seek the most economical deals with our supplier. This year, Trustees took the decision to make changes to our heating and lighting systems in order to improve their quality and, hopefully, contain costs for the future (see next section for details).

Other significant costs are annual insurance, on which we are entering the last year of a three-year fixed price arrangement, and repayment of a £20,000 loan from ACRE taken out in 2017 to complete modernisation works. The good news is that, in June 2025, we finished paying off the loan which means an annual saving for us of around £2,500.

Given the international situation, the outlook for energy costs and general inflation is, at best, uncertain. So, in common with other organisations and households, we are bracing ourselves for a challenging year financially. Our flexibility is limited – raising hire charges or using up the modest reserve (which we are already tapping to carry out the heating and lighting improvements mentioned above). The Trustees will keep all this under careful review.

Maintenance, Investments and Improvements

Following periodic reviews of electrical safety and fire safety, various works were carried out at a cost of over £2,000 to ensure that the Hall continues to comply with the required standards.

As noted in last year's report, heating the Hall adequately in the cold season at reasonable cost is a major challenge for us. There is no easy answer to this problem given the design of the building but, after much research, the Trustees decided in autumn 2025 that steps needed to be taken to improve existing arrangements. Expert advice is that the most cost-effective solution is to continue to use the night storage radiators and ceramic wall heaters for background heat and to top it up, when necessary, with modern halogen wall heaters which provide rapid heating, effectively warming users rather than the air throughout the building. To complement this, better thermostatic controls and a people detection system, so that the wall heaters come on automatically when the Hall is being used and the base temperature is unacceptably low, should provide better warmth in cold weather while helping to contain costs.

Trustees further decided that lighting throughout the Hall, some of which is well over twenty years old, should be upgraded to the latest LED technology which will be more configurable to suit the nature of events and help minimise costs.

Works to make these changes will commence in April 2026 at a cost in excess of £8,000. We are very grateful to the Puddletown Area Parish Council which has agreed a grant of up to £4,000 towards this project.

The challenge of internal redecoration remains. Few professional decorators seem prepared to take on the work on such a high internal ceiling even with substantial and expensive scaffolding which is unaffordable at present. Yet it is now 9 years since the last decoration and the lower walls, in particular, are showing increasing signs of wear and tear. We, therefore, plan during 2026-27 to use volunteers to redecorate the lower walls in both the main hall and the rear hall. Together with the changes to heating and lighting, this should significantly refresh the functionality of the Hall.

Hall Management

As at 31 March 2025, the CIO had seven Trustees: Peter Walton (Chairman), Andrew Turner (Treasurer), Jonathan Van Baars (Secretary), Sue Adams, Fiona Cope, Anna Gibson and Margaret Walton. We were delighted to welcome Anna Gibson as a new Trustee as from January 2026. Anna has a background in events management and fund-raising and will bring valuable skills and experience to our work. The Trustees were saddened by the death of Teresa Turner, a former Trustee and secretary, who also undertook the cleaning for several years.

The old charity has four trustees – Peter Walton (Chairman), Andrew Turner (Treasurer), Jonathan Van Baars (Secretary) and Margaret Walton. These appointments are made each year at the Annual General Meeting.

The Hall relies on many other people to keep it running. Special thanks are again due to Sue Stoodley who does a great job in looking after the Hall and keep it clean. Thanks are also due to Bev Clayton who oversees hall bookings via the Hallmaster System. Sadly (for the Hall), she will be stepping down from that role as she is moving from the village. Happily, Andy Turner has agreed to take it on.

As ever, the Trustees are very grateful to all those – too many to mention individually – who help with events at the Hall. We are conscious that many of these functions – for example the lunches and breakfasts for the Martyrs Festival and the Harvest Festival – involve a lot of time and effort. This is much appreciated, not least by all those who attend these occasions. We believe it also helps reinforce the strong community spirit which is such a feature of the village.

Lastly on management, now we have successfully registered a title to the property with the Land Registry, we continue to work on transferring the land and buildings from the old to the new charity at which time the old charity will be wound up.

Conclusion

The Trustees job is to provide and maintain a village Hall for the benefit of the people of Tolpuddle and, once again during 2025-26, that is what we have done. As generations move

through the village and social habits and fashions change, so must the Hall adapt to what people want from it. The re-opening of the Martyrs Inn has understandably provided another social focus within the village. An uncertain world means we all face difficult economic and financial challenges and that seems unlikely to change in the near future. But the good news is that we have a quality Hall which is well-used by the community and, for the present at least, remains financially viable.

Peter Walton
Chairman, Tolpuddle Village Hall CIO

APPENDIX

The Charitable object of the Tolpuddle Village Hall Charitable Incorporated Organisation (No: 1195647) is as follows:

"The provision and maintenance of a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Tolpuddle without distinction of sex, *sexual orientation, age, disability or race or* political, religious or other opinions, including use for meetings, lectures and classes and other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants."

With the exclusion of the words in italics above, the object of the Tolpuddle Village Hall old charity (No: 257403) is the same.