

We promised to let you know...

An enormous thank you goes out to all those who completed the questionnaire brochure that was sent out in Autumn as part of the Little Ouseburn Village Hall Listening Exercise (LOVE) Project.

The purpose of the exercise was to listen and to continue the conversation with the villages to determine the most appropriate future for the Little Ouseburn Village Hall.

Brochures went out to 142 properties in Little Ouseburn, Kirby Hall and Thorpe Underwood. 42 booklets were returned. Sometimes more than one booklet was completed in a household, which means that the response rate was around 40% of the population including adults, young people and children. This is really significant because the market research industry standard for a self-completion survey is 5 – 10%.

What it means is that we now have strong data from a large number of the residents of the hall's catchment area. Data that we can work to understand and, along with the villages, respond to.

The report analysis is detailed and is available as a short or long read! It is available for you to look at on the LOVE website: <http://skyblue.org.uk/love/index.php/listening-exercise-results/>

Here are some, but not all, of the highlights:

- Echoing our 2019 survey, respondents were keen to express how much they love and are proud of the villages served by the hall. They have strong memories of when the villages and the Hall have been at their best, whether that be village social events, Open Gardens, or how we all responded to the flooding in 2015 and how many people have volunteered to offer support services to the villages in the current Covid pandemic.
- Despite being motivated to get involved there was a clear view that there was not enough to do locally for people. Latent demand for activities is very strong (with 89 suggestions made for clubs, activities or groups), but their supply is weak!
- Nearly three in four say they do not have as much social contact as they would like and nearly three in five say they, or someone they know, is feeling lonely. Some people expressed a desire to do something about it and raise the question whether the Hall could be a part of the solution in future.
- The villages are blessed with people who already volunteer across a really broad area of skills and activities ranging from working with refugees, helping in charity shops, through to being school governors or working with York Theatre Royal.
- 9 in 10 respondents believe that when they undertake social action i.e. doing something together that matters to them, that can really affect the way the community is run and improve the quality of life in the villages. This local energy is something perhaps the village hall can connect with in future and is something we want to explore more with you.
- Nearly half of those who responded felt that the hall was unwelcoming, either because of the building structure (cold, dreary, outdated) or the social structure (cliquey, elitist, separatist).
- People appear to have lots of ideas about how the hall might be used and what they would really like to see happening. They are also strong in their views as to how the place should feel. A lot of the responses were made up of ideas about wellbeing through connection – meeting others, engaging in joint activities; being active and learning together.

- There is a strong wish to know more about the progress of the LOVE project and the current plans for developing the Hall, and to be involved in Zoom meetings and focus groups in the next phase of the project

The Next Phase...

- The plan is to work with the data and responses you have given and to involve you in discussion.
- An appropriate future for the village hall should be determined by the residents of the villages and so we need to mobilise the talents, enthusiasm and ideas that the survey tells us are present in abundance.
- Over the coming weeks we will be in touch to invite you to some (virtual) meetings and work with you to help to address some of the ambitions that are expressed and deal with the real concerns that are felt.

Our independent researcher from Skyblue, helping manage the LOVE Project, feels that given the strong response to the 2020 survey, the range of ideas presented, the talents of the residents and the feelings that the hall evokes (both positive and negative), it is sensible to explore ways in which the hall could be improved to provide enhanced community benefit in future.

Any option to dispose of the hall would likely be received negatively given the strong sentiments expressed in both the 2019 and 2020 surveys, however, the plans that were developed in 2019 may exceed community's hopes and expectations and not everyone who is interested in them has had chance to see them and talk them through with Trustees. This next phase, therefore, is a great opportunity to hone the thinking that has already been done and build on the brand-new insights about what really matters to residents in the community of Thorpe Underwood, Kirby Hall and Little Ouseburn.

By March of this year we would like to feel that we have a really clear sense of what that appropriate use is and how to respond to what you have said. The Covid 19 restrictions that have so far constrained the activities of the Little Ouseburn Village Hall may, by then, just be beginning to ease. This might mean that if we have strong support and involvement from the villages we can have a clear plan to transform the Village Hall into a strong community resource and hub, and we can get on with it!

In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like to pick up on any of the issues raised then please write to us at lohallmgt@emaildodo.com

Thank you.

The Trustees of Little Ouseburn Village Hall CIO