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Southern  
Dorset  
LOCAL ACTION GROUP

## **LATEST NEWS ON THE PARISH ROOM AND RUNNING TRACK PROJECT**

At the end of November 2018 we were delighted to learn that under the EU funded LEADER Rural Development Programme for England the village is being offered a grant of ££55,418.40 via the Southern Dorset Leader Local Action Group. This is close to the 80% that we had requested.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December a contract was signed between the Parish Council and Dorset County Council (the local fund administrator) to take advantage of this offer. The contract is complex and requires the Parish Council to abide by a number of criteria to enable receipt of the total value of the funding.

For the outstanding 20% (ca £15,000), the Parish Council has sourced funding courtesy of bequests from the United Charities of Buckland Newton, Buckland Newton Community Property Trust, the 2018 Village Fete Committee, Sir William Aykroyd's ringfenced fund held by the Parish Council, alongside some S106 Award funding available to the parish.

Since the LEADER grant is not paid until 6 weeks after completion of the project, the Parish Council are grateful to be able to source a bridging loan from Dorset Council for £55,000 to be repaid on receipt of the grant. This has saved the complication and expense of acquiring a commercial loan for 7 months.

The lead up to acquiring the grant was hugely fraught, largely because of the very short time frames to be met. On learning of a funding opportunity from LEADER in July we put in a pre-application form to see if the project would be eligible. We successfully passing this first stage in August and then had just 4 weeks in order to gather all the material and submit the complicated claim form by the end of September. This involved getting letters of support from parishioners and organizations in the village, putting together the design specifications for the Parish Room and the trackway, contacting 6 contractors with local connections who were willing and able to bid on the contract, showing them around the site and getting at least 6 sealed bids by the 10<sup>th</sup> September; submitting a planning application and getting rapid planning approval from WDDC and finally finding the essential 20% support funding alongside a short term bridging loan.

The opening of the sealed bids on the 10<sup>th</sup> September was a huge surprise in terms of the range of quotes, considering each of the contractors had identical and very detailed specifications, all had visited the site and discussed the project, and all had some form of local connection. The quotes for conversion of the Parish Room ranged from ca £155,000 to ca £48,000. The quotes for installation of the trackway were much closer ranging from ca £32,000 to ca £22,000. Since we had estimated the cost of the whole project to be in the ballpark of £70,000 in our LEADER pre-application, we were hugely relieved to find we had at least one contractor

for each of the parts of the project that would be within budget. The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> September detail the individual quotations.

The Parish Council will award contracts to the lowest bidders N & J Baker Ltd for the Parish Room conversion and BN Hire Ltd for the trackway in January 2019. Work will start on the Pavilion in mid March to be completed by mid-August in time for use by the village fete. Work on the running track will start as soon as the weather permits in late spring/early summer 2019 and should be completed within 2 weeks..