

Worth Matravers Village Hall

Health and Safety Report

Jack Ross

Richard Sandham and I completed a health and safety survey on Saturday the 9th October 2004, the following is my report.

Recommended actions and questions are in bold.

Reviewed by Hugh Cochrane in December 2011 - Subsequent updates and comments are shown in blue italics.

Fire

1. Fire extinguisher inspections were 'in date'.
2. Lights in exit signs are working though the switch on the exit sign in the meeting room is in a rather awkward place – at the point of exit and separate from all other switches except the outside light.
3. Signs in the meeting room, kitchen and upstairs room, are in place.
4. Following the damp proofing work in the main hall, some adjustments were necessary which were completed as follows:
 - i. Fire extinguisher cleaned of magnolia emulsion and re-hung
 - ii. Fire extinguisher warning sign and fire instruction sign recovered, cleaned and re-attached to the wall.
Since re-attaching the sign in the main hall, someone has attempted to move it leaving rather a mess from the reapplied double-sided tape. Hall now redecorated.
5. Fire blanket is in place in the kitchen for fat fires but the instructions and reasons for its use are not clear.
Clearer instructions for its purpose and its use are recommended. *Kitchen refitted and decorated, new notices in place.*
6. A powder extinguisher for electrical fires is in place in the kitchen with a sign for its use - again rather unclear. *As 5 above.*
7. The smoke alarms, now linked to the fire alarm system were noted but not checked.
Recommended that the trustees conduct a fire alarm and exit test and that adequate instructions are provided to all Village Hall users. *Trustees briefing has been held, procedure in place to brief all new Hall users.*
8. An old, manually created 'No Smoking' sign is falling of the wall in the kitchen.
Clearer 'No Smoking' signs are recommended, throughout if the policy is no smoking. *Not now required as 'No Smoking' by Law.*
9. Wheelchair exit is possible only via the double doors in the meeting room, which may prove awkward if the door is locked. Unbolting the door allows them to be pushed open, but unbolting the door would be difficult for a wheelchair user.
Question whether a key to the double doors should be hung inside the meeting room, possibly in a glass case for security purposes, to cover such eventualities. *New doors fitted.*
10. Wheelchair exit is not possible from the main hall via the main door.
Is this acceptable? *See Project item 3.*
11. Night storage heaters are not a particular fire hazard but in the event of an electrical fire the water extinguishers are inadequate.
Question clearer instructions for electrical fires in all main rooms. *New electric heaters fitted throughout*

12. Fire doors are a significant concern.

- i. Not one of the fire doors shuts, fully, automatically. Adjustments to the door closers did not solve the problem.
This needs attention from an expert. Probably also to the door furniture.
- ii. The practice of wedging open fire doors is apparent. This seems to be encouraged by the provision of a wedge by each of the doors which could potentially be considered negligent on the part of the trustees.
It is recommended that his practice is visibly discouraged and the wedges removed. In the meantime the wedges have been removed to a unit under the sink in the kitchen.
*On the subsequent visit it was noted that all the wedges have been returned to each of the fire doors. **This needs attention.** Wedges no longer in use.*

13. Most of the appliances in the kitchen were unplugged but not all.

Clearer instructions for unplugging electrical appliances on departure should be provided, and the plugs themselves more clearly marked.
Done.

Kitchen hygiene

1. The kitchen did not seem to be particularly clean. It is difficult to assess the actual hazard, if any, and maybe its current state is a leftover from the recent damp proofing work *and the more recent decorating.*
The kitchen could do with a thorough cleaning.
There is a question also about the arrangements for keeping the kitchen clean. Do we just rely on hall users to leave it in an appropriate state for the next user, or is there something more formal. Used tea towels left to dry over worktops for the next user is questionable. Should there not be clean tea towels and cloths provided for each user. *Kitchen refitted and redecorated, caretaker appointed to ensure cleanliness and provision of clean tea towels etc, procedure for briefing new Hall users.*
2. The sign for use of the kitchen seems comprehensive. It is lifted directly from an Act of Parliament, but it is old, a 'poor' photocopy, and a little insignificant. **It should be replaced.** *Appears to have been replaced.*

First aid kits

There are two first aid kits. Neither are dated so it is difficult to determine whether they are suitable. The red one looks OK. The smaller green one looks as though it is old and maybe incomplete.

Question replacing at least this one and fixing to the wall, in the kitchen and another strategic point – perhaps upstairs. *Now appears to be 3 kits located in kitchen, contents needs to be checked, also need to either put sign up to show position or to put in more visible place and ensure users record accidents in Accident Book*

Access

Wheelchair access is available via the ramp into the meeting room and through the hallway to the main hall. Toilet facilities are available for disabled and seem adequate. **As mentioned above there is a question about disabled evacuation from the main hall in an emergency. *See Project, plans include improved access to toilets and disabled access to Main Hall.***

Outside

1. The shrubbery by the wheelchair ramp to the meeting room is overgrown. The handrail is covered by a spiky bush, rendering it unusable and potentially dangerous. There have also been some brambles reported. The area needs cutting back and maintaining away from the handrail. *Now done.*
2. The outside lights now seem to be working.

Instructions and responsibilities

There is question about the Health and Safety instructions provided to users of the hall. Derek Ralls (*now Richard Sandham, Booking Officer or Trustee*) our Village Hall Booking Officer, walks new users, (or potential new users) round the Hall pointing out fire exits, kitchen rules etc.

The booking form points out Hall users responsibilities regarding fire regulations, proper use of electrical appliances, food health and hygiene regulations, and reporting of accidents and/or injuries. The booking form also specifically prohibits use of certain items that might be considered a fire hazard, and highlights some specific limits regarding numbers of people allowed on the premises and in any one room.

Communicating these Conditions of Hire in this way may satisfy our responsibilities as Trustees but they do fit in to the category of 'small print' and can hardly be considered a clear communication of how to act in the event of an emergency, such as a fire or injury.

Having said that, the environment is not particularly hazardous – probably low risk – and common sense goes a long way. Nevertheless some improvements are advisable.

It is recommended that we find a way to ensure that the 'person responsible' for each group of Hall users is provided with clear fire safety, health and hygiene guidelines specifically relating to food, and other security instructions. This is both for the use of the facilities whilst Hall users are present, and in what condition we expect them to leave the premises on departure – specifically in relation to such things as electrical appliances, and the cleanliness of the kitchen. This could be achieved as an attachment to the booking form for occasional users and/or a special memo to all regular user groups. We could also display clearer signs and such things as 'end of session' checklists. Trustees briefing has been held, procedure for briefing new Hall users in place.

Jack Ross

Additional note

Subsequent discussion has highlighted the need to relocate the toilets in order to reduce the risk of accident in the narrow corridor outside the kitchen door. This door is currently used during events when helpers/caterers etc may be carrying hot food/liquids to the Main Hall.

Additional Note (ex Jack Ross)

On a subsequent visit to the Hall on the 19th October 2004, it was an afternoon session of the Keep Fit Club. They were not happy with the state of the Hall. I listened to their concerns which were these:

- 1. Two lights, the one in the entrance hall and the one on the upstairs landing, both operated by the switch in the entrance hall, are not working.*
- 2. From the recent decoration, up the stairs, in the upstairs room and in the kitchen there is quite a bit of paint left on the floors – on the carpet tiles on which the ladies do their 'keep fit', on bannister rails, on doors, and on window returns etc. They were very nice about it but find it quite difficult to accept 'lying down', as you might say.*

3. *The general 'state' of the hall – cleanliness, tidiness etc. they find disappointing*

Whilst this is not entirely a health and safety issue some of it does touch on that and as Trustees, we need to deal with our Hall users – particularly the regular users.

Following my recent visits to the hall I was going to recommend that it has a thorough cleaning and a good tidying. There seems to be a lot of old forgotten about, rubbish everywhere. It is not just the kitchen area that needs cleaning, for hygiene purposes, but throughout. I think the volunteers who have completed the decorating are to be commended for their considerable commitment and enthusiasm, but there is now a need to clean up the excess paint from floors, doors, rails, work-surfaces etc. and to generally clean away dust and any old rubbish lying around. Sounds to me like a 'work party' job.

Following all the work that has been completed recently it would good to finish it off properly. You probably had this in mind anyway.

In the meantime, regarding the lights in the hallway, As it was two lights on the same switch I checked the trip switches and they seemed OK. I could find no replacement bulbs anywhere.

Question – should there be spare bulbs on the premises? To have no lighting in a stairwell presents a safety hazard I would think.