

Slaley Commemoration Hall

Business Plan

Commemoration Hall, Slaley, Hexham, NE47 0BQ, Northumberland

Charity registration number 522138

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Executive Summary

- Slaley is a small rural village in Northumberland, lying 6 miles south of the River Tyne. Slaley Parish has an adult population of around 550 made up mainly of local farming families and commuters who work in nearby Hexham or Newcastle.
- Slaley is a sustainable village with a First School, Parish Church, shop and pub.
- The Parish has a long tradition of community involvement: each year it hosts Slaley Show; and both the pub and shop are owned by the community. Slaley Commemoration Hall has undoubtedly been indispensable in fostering and supporting this community spirit, by providing a unique space for locals to meet.
- The Commemoration Hall was built and gifted to the community in 1922 by the Hunting family of Slaley Hall. It is a substantial stone building, which can accommodate up to 150 people. It is currently used by a variety of local groups and individuals for around 15 hours each week.
- The Hall has been well-maintained over the years and some improvements made, such as a new kitchen. However there is an on-going problem with damp in the toilet block, which also has a couple of health & safety issues; and storage facilities are inadequate. The Hall committee are aware that usage has declined, especially for private events, and feel that an upgrade is required both to prevent further decline, and widen the appeal of the Hall for private events, for example, weddings.
- The committee therefore propose to raise money for a new extension, which would replace the existing toilet block, provide improved storage facilities and include an extra community room which could be used for business hot-desking as well as offering extra space for larger events such as weddings and ceilidhs.
- Plans have been drawn up and the project costed at around £155,000. Planning permission has been granted. see ref 18/01509/FUL on the Northumberland County Website. The plan is to complete the extension in time for the 100th anniversary in 2020.
- The committee believes that upgraded facilities will allow them to market the Hall more widely and increase hire income by 60%; Hall expenses are mainly fixed so are

expected to increase by only 15% over the same time period.

- A programme of fundraising is in hand; however realistically this will only raise a small proportion of the funding required for the project (around £6500). Grants are therefore being sought from a variety of community-oriented funds.

1 Background & Organisation

1. Slaley Parish

Slaley is a small rural village lying south of the Tyne, 6 miles from Hexham, 11 miles from Consett and 22 miles from Newcastle. The parish has about 300 households and an adult population of approximately 550. The community comprises traditional local farming families and commuters who work in Hexham, Newcastle or further afield.

Slaley is a sustainable village, with a First School, a parish church, a community-owned pub and a village shop (also recently taken over by the community). Slaley Methodist Church building closed in 2017 and the congregation now worships at St Mary's Parish Church.

Each August the village plays host to Slaley Show, a traditional agricultural show which is well supported, attracting over 1500 entries to the horticultural, industrial, childrens and animal sections. It has an annual income of around £20K.

Slaley Hall Hotel, a golf resort with lodges, is situated in the parish. There are also a number of B&B and self-catering properties catering to tourists, who come to enjoy the Northumberland countryside, the nearby North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and attractions such as Hadrians Wall, Blanchland and Derwent Reservoir.

NCC are revising the green belt restrictions for market and affordable housing up to 2030 and local landowners have been advised to register any land they may consider for development under the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment). This may bring opportunities for new affordable housing in the village.

2. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The parishes of Slaley & Hexhamshire currently score 54% on the IMD ((LSOA code: Northumberland 040E; 2015 data), so better than 54% of wards in England. However they score very poorly, only 1%, on "Barriers to Services", largely due to distance from local amenities. Bus services from the village to Hexham and Consett are very limited, with only one return service each weekday and 4 return services on Saturdays (689 Hexham to Consett currently run by Go-Ahead).

3. The Commemoration Hall

The Commemoration Hall is a substantial stone building consisting of a large main hall, a smaller meeting room with bar facilities and a kitchen. Built by Charles Samuel and Agnes Mona Hunting of Slaley Hall to commemorate the safe return of their children from the First World War, it was given to the community at the end of December 1922, to be managed by trustees. The committee, which currently has 11 members, is elected annually. Meetings are held monthly and minutes are posted on the Slaley website.

The objects of the organization as stated in the governing body articles:

To be used for all or any of the purposes following for the benefit of the inhabitants of the parish of Slaley

- As a Parish Hall, Reading and Recreation Room, including so far as the law may allow the use of the same for music, dancing and theatricals
- For Lectures, meetings and conferences (social or otherwise) and committee meetings, in connection with organisations affecting the welfare of the said Parish
- For any other meeting or for any other objects, ends or purposes having in view the spiritual, intellectual, moral or social wants of the inhabitants of the said parish without distinction of creed.

4. Hall Usage

The Hall, which can accommodate up to 150 people, is used weekly for Badminton, Exercise Classes, Carpet Bowls and a Coffee Morning organised by the Dilston College, a further education college for those with special educational needs. It is used for regular meetings of the Women's Institute, Slaley Film Club, Slaley & Healey Parish Councils and Messy Church (an ecumenical initiative organized by the Parish Church, Methodist Church and St Elizabeth Catholic Church Minsteracres). It is also used for annual events such as the Slaley Leek Show, St Mary's Church Christmas Fair, a Macmillan Coffee morning, fundraising events for Slaley Show, and AGMs/EGMS for the Rose & Crown pub and Slaley shop. Over the past year, the hall has been hired for private use for events such as parties. The hall acts as the local Polling Station.

Weekly	Monthly/ Quarterly	Annual/ Ad-hoc
Badminton	Womens Institute	Leek & Flower Show
Exercise Classes	Film Club	St Mary's Christmas Fair
Carpet Bowls	Slaley Parish Council	Macmillan Coffee Morning
Dilston College Coffee Morning	Healey Parish Council	Rose & Crown AGM
	Messy Church (ecumenical)	Slaley Shop meetings
	Craft Group	Slaley Show fundraisers
	Local History Group	Polling Station
		Private parties

On average the Hall is used for approximately 15 hours each week. This not untypical of village hall usage, but it does mean that there is significant additional capacity available. Some regular clubs have ceased in recent years (Youth Club; Mothers & Toddlers; Gardening) and overall usage has declined over the past 20 years. A list from 1996 includes several clubs which no longer exist (Mothers & Toddlers, Fun for Mums, Welfare of the Elderly weekly whist drive & weekly Lunch Club; Sunday School); events which now take place elsewhere (PTA /FOSS meetings and school concerts which take place at the school); and Dances, which seem to have fallen out of favour. Some of these clubs were organized by the local Council. The committee feel that private events in particular are taking place elsewhere in venues perceived to be more attractive.

5. Building Condition

The Hall has been surveyed recently and a report on the condition of the building is attached in Appendix 1.

2 Project Objective

There are two main issues which reduce the attractiveness of the Hall as a venue. The toilets are old-fashioned and damp, as well as being substandard from a health & safety point of view (Gents toilet: steep access steps; insufficient space on landing; insufficient headroom). And the storage facilities are inadequate, making it awkward to set up and clear the hall with tables and chairs.

The Hall Committee has therefore decided to raise money for a renovation/ extension project. This would involve replacing the toilet block with an extension which will provide a new meeting room. The toilets will be relocated within the original building as part of the refurbishment. The works will provide improved storage and will refresh the overall appearance of the hall. It is believed that the addition of an extra room would make the overall facilities more attractive, eg as a wedding venue, as well as providing space for local business folk to hot desk or meet. Relocating the toilets will resolve the issues relating to damp/drainage (see Appendix 1). Plans have been drawn up and costed at around £155,000. Planning approval has been granted. The plan is to complete the renovations in time for the 100th anniversary in 2020.

3 Current Status

3.1 Building Condition

A critical assessment of the toilet block was carried out in December 2012. The Hall Committee recently carried out a review of the condition of the building,. Both of these reports are attached in Appendix 1.

In summary, the following have been identified as priorities for improvement:

- Joinery repairs necessary to the eaves and lantern

- Poor drainage to the toilets which frequently block.
- Storage should be improved
- Toilets to be improved
- Improvements to the audio visual system

3.2 Opinion Survey

In order to help determine plans for the future, the committee carried out an opinion survey in 2017. A questionnaire was completed by 66 parish residents. The full results are attached in Appendix 2 and are also available on the Slaley website here https://www.slaley.org.uk/site_files/6680/upload_files/HallSurvey.pdf?dl=1

Key findings:

- Nearly one third of respondents (21) had booked the hall for an event
- The top priorities (from a given list which didn't include toilets or storage which were acknowledged as being a problem):
 - Provide Wi-Fi
 - Redecorate
 - Provide overhead projection facilities
 - Provide a key code entry system
- Respondents suggested that the hall could benefit from a number of improvements:
 - better toilets (described by one person as “disgusting”)
 - better storage
 - more comfortable chairs
 - redecoration
 - replace the curtains with blinds
 - improve the porch area
 - modernize the lighting

- easier to use cooker
 - larger doors between the committee room and main hall
 - lounge type seating in the committee room
 - better parking
 - remove metal cabinets
 - provide a large TV screen, Wi-Fi and more electric sockets
 - on-line booking system
- It should also look at
 - better marketing (signage, website)
 - more events/ services (exhibitions; lending library; party package; variety of classes)

3.3 Group discussions

The opinion survey was supplemented with group discussions with local user groups. These included the Slaley Show committee, Slaley Parish Council, Healey Parish Council, Bowls Club, Dilston Coffee Morning, Keep Fit Groups and the Film Club. Areas for improvement identified were:

- toilets (damp, different levels)
- more storage
- decoration (more neutral)
- add an extra room (lounge for sitting, with comfy seats)
- porch/entrance
- set up for hot-desking
- remove artwork
- have more comfortable chairs
- improve acoustics
- provide a proper cloakroom

- have a bigger bar
- improve marketing (people don't walk past the hall much and don't know what's on)
- energy-efficient lighting
- parking

It was noted that the hall was a very good size for indoor bowls.

4 Community Need & Demand Potential

Slaley has a healthy and active parish community, which the Hall has underpinned:

- Slaley Show, which has a turnover of around £20K, has been running for 158 years and is organised by a small, dedicated committee supported by a large number of volunteers
- There are a number of local clubs and societies organised by local people
- The pub was brought into community ownership in 2013
- The village shop was taken over by the community in 2017 and is now run by a group of 36 volunteers

The Commemoration Hall is a very important hub for the community to meet and socialize together. While there are other venues in the village and surrounding area, the Hall offers a unique and flexible space:

- largest venue available at an affordable cost
- suitable for a wide variety of activities including dancing, exercise, badminton, meetings etc.
- it operates as a “church hall” – the ecumenical Messy Church, for example, and the annual St Mary’s Church Fair both use the Commemoration Hall

Over the years, the Commemoration Hall has enabled villagers and parishioners to get together and get to know one another. This has undoubtedly been a key factor in maintaining the strength of the community, resulting in successful recent initiatives such as the purchase of the Rose & Crown pub by the community, and the village shop being taken over by the community. The Shop is now run by volunteers, with a roster of 36 people manning the shop 9-5pm in shifts, and further volunteers running “back office” functions such as purchasing and finance.

If the Hall did not exist then people would either have to travel at least 4-5 miles to alternative village halls (Whitley Chapel, Riding Mill, Corbridge) or other venues; or stop participating. Bus services from the village are very limited so the great majority of additional journeys are by car. There is, therefore, also an environmental impact if services and leisure activities in the village were curtailed.

The committee believes that renovation, in the form of a replacement extension comprising toilets, storage facilities and community room, combined with other more minor improvements (Wi-Fi, lighting, soft furnishings etc.) would encourage greater use of the hall. It is estimated that usage could be increased from the current average of 15 hours per week to 20 hours per week, or an extra 260 hours per year. For comparison, the mean use of village halls was understood to be between 10-20 hours per week in 2009 (Acre Research Report: The changing use of rural community buildings).

This increased use will be achieved by starting up 2 new weekly 2-hour activities (restarting a Mother & Toddler Group; recruiting someone to run a weekly dance or yoga class) and by obtaining at least one extra (4 hour) private letting per month. This would generate an additional £50 income per week or £200 per month.

The committee plans to put together a wedding/ party package in conjunction with the Rose & Crown Pub, which would make the Hall more attractive as an affordable private venue. Nearby Slaley Hall and Healey Barn are alternative local wedding venues but are expensive. This will be accompanied by enhanced marketing of the hall, to ensure it is top-of-mind with local residents as a potential venue (see section 8 Marketing for more detail).

Other ideas are under consideration, but are currently more speculative:

- use of the hall for monthly business co-working/ networking space
- holding exhibitions
- encourage use of the hall for private business meetings
- encourage school holiday activities

If the renovations do not go ahead, the committee believes there will be a continuing gradual decline in the hall usage, as locals, especially those hiring the hall for private functions, will seek more modern venues.

A list of competing venues is included in Appendix 3.

5. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hall is in sound condition, with an excellent kitchen - good, flexible space - excellent for indoor bowls - volunteer & community support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - toilets - storage - lack of Wi-Fi - limited marketing
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offer hall as a wedding venue in conjunction with Rose & Crown (pub) catering - growing popularity of fitness classes (Yoga, Pilates etc.) – market hall to local teachers - raise awareness among local population of availability for private hire for parties but also badminton, table tennis etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - other halls/ venues continue to upgrade, reducing attractiveness of Slaley - inability to access sufficient funds to improve

6. The Future: Proposed Action Plan

	Action	When?	Cost	Who?	Comment
1	Keysafe for easier access	2017			Complete
2	Hall information on Slaley website with email booking	2017			Complete
3	Wi-Fi, OHP & Audio	Q2 2018		M Elphick	Grant successfully accured and work in progress

4	Joinery repairs	Q1 2018			Complete as per yearly action plan
5	External board for publicity	2018			In progress
6	Decorate main hall	On hold			Funds available, on hold pending overall future plans
7	Improve marketing/ PR Eg greater visibility in parish magazine; selective advertising in Courant	ongoing			
8	New toilet block/extra room/ storage	2019-20	£155K		Requires funding
9	Recruit new regular groups	ongoing			
10	On-line booking system?				
11	Create party package with pub (stage 1, before refurb?)				
12	Create wedding package with pub (stage 2). Visit wedding shows or advertise in Courant wedding supplement.	Post refurb			

7. Financials

7.1. Current Financials

y/e March	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Income	7800	6100	6200	10000	4600
- hire	5570				
- other	2200				
Expenses	6500	5600	6400	6100	6300
Surplus/ deficit	1300	500	-200	3900	-1700
Reserves	4500				

7.2.

Notes

- The majority of income comes from hire charges
- The remainder comes from fundraising events, donations and grants
- 10% of hire income is transferred to the reserve fund every year
- Utility charges represent a significant expenditure
- Higher income in 2014 was due to extra fundraising

7.2. Project budget

Construction cost	£155,000	
Building regulations	£1,000	
Sub total	£156,000	
VAT	£31,200	
Architects fees @ 8% of construction costs (pro bono - see secured funding)	£12,400	
Structural engineer (pr bono - see secured funding)	£1,000	
PROJECT COST	£200,600	£200,600

Building work will be carried out by a local builder but decoration and finishing touches will be done by volunteers. Committee member Ros Doonan will act as Project Manager. with Doonan Architects of Hexham.

7.3. Grants

Applications will be made to the following organisations for grants:

- Hunting Family (founding family)
- Garfield Weston Anniversary Fund
- Big Lottery “Reaching Communities” Fund
- Joicey Trust
- Community Foundation
- Community Chest (up to £5K)
- Sir James Knott

7.4. Fundraising

The Hall committee organizes regular fundraising events. An enhanced programme of events is being planned to raise money for the building project. Three events have already been held, raising £1500. A further 5 events are planned in 2018 and are expected to raise £2000. Further events will be held in 2019. However the largest portion of the money required for the building project will have to come from grants.

Secured sources of funding:

'Work in kind': architect	£12,400	
'Work in kind': structural engineer	£1,000	
Commemoration Hall funds	£10,000	
Fund raising to date	£2,500	
County Councillor's community grant	£5,000	
Slaley Parish Council	£5,000	
Barley Hill Endowment Fund via community foundation	£5,000	
Materials 'in kind': Matthew Charlton (Jewson)	£5,000	
Recovery of VAT on 'accessibility'	£2,500	
Total secured funding		48,400

7.5. Forecast financials

	2021	2017
Income	12500	7800
- hire	10000	5570
- other	2500	2200
Expenses	7500	6500
Surplus/ deficit	5000	1300

7.6.

Notes

- 60% increase in hire income over 2017 (mainly due to an increase in hours hired out)
- 14% increase in other income
- 15% increase in expenses (hall costs remain very similar from year to year regardless of usage)

8. Management/ organization

The hall is managed by a team of 11 committee members, who are all volunteers. One member acts as booking secretary. There is a paid caretaker. The hall is well supported by other volunteers, who carry out redecoration and other tasks free-of-charge. Committee members/ trustees are listed on the Slaley website: <https://www.slaley.org.uk/page/village-hall/>

9. Marketing

Activities which take place in the Hall are currently advertised in the monthly Parish newsletter, delivered free to all homes; and in the weekly Slaley Notes column of the local newspaper, the Hexham Courant. The Hall has a page on the Slaley website <https://www.slaley.org.uk/page/village-hall/> which has full details of the hall and how to book. It is also listed on the hallshire.com and venues4hire.org websites and receives enquiries

from these channels. The committee is in the process of organizing an external notice board to advertise events.

Other plans include:

- Monthly Village Hall section in the Parish Newsletter
- Marketing leaflet to be delivered with parish newsletter (advertising the hall as private venue with catering package from pub)
- Ask people to post photos of their hall events/ activities on social media
- Someone to actively manage social media for the parish as a whole (not just village hall) liaising with parish council/ pub/ shop/ slaley notes/ parish newsletter etc.
- Continue to maintain listings on meeting rooms booking websites used by businesses
- Selective advertising of events in Hexham Courant
- Advertise as a wedding venue once refurb completed (Courant supplement; wedding fairs etc). There are websites eg hitched.co.uk which list wedding venues.

10.Environmental Impact

The Hall contributes towards carbon reduction in the following ways:

- by offering activities in the Parish, many car trips to Hexham, Corbridge and other destinations are saved (local bus service is very limited). A rough calculation suggests that the existence of the hall saves approximately 20 tonnes of CO2 annually (saves 7.5 trips every week of 10 miles for 10 people)
- replacing the current lighting with LED fittings could save approximately 60% on electricity usage for lighting; this project is likely to form part of the wider building project

11.Monitoring & Evaluation

The action plan is managed and overseen by the committee.

The building project will be sub-contracted to a local reputable building company appointed after receiving at least 3 quotations. Chair Ros Doonan will act as Project Man-

ager, calling on the expertise of local award-winning architect Doonan Architects, as required.

The project will be deemed successful if an increase in income of over 50% is achieved.

Appendix 1

Building Condition Assessment / Survey Report (2017)

In general the building is in a structurally sound state with the exception of the rear toilets.

The main block is constructed of well-dressed stone work. The roof is finished in natural slates with lead valleys. The roof is generally watertight. Although the building suffered vandalism - pilfering of lead - this was rectified in 2016. The windows to the main building are upvc with double glazing. The rainwater goods are a mix of cast iron and plastic, which are serviceable. There are generous overhanging eaves which are showing signs of decay. On the roof there is a fine louvred ventilation lantern which also appears to be showing some signs of decay.

The main building stands approximately 500mm above ground level. Consequently there is little evidence of rising damp. The ground floor is of suspended timber construction which seems to be in a good condition.

The building has reasonable access for disabled users with a ramp to the main door, which is of generous width. The inner lobby door is also of generous width. The remaining internal doors may not be fully compliant.

There is limited car parking available on the tarmacked forecourt. To the sides and rear of the building there are grassed areas. Inevitably, cars are parked on the main road for larger events.

Rear Toilets

To the rear and attached to the main building are the ladies', gents and disabled toilets and storage. The existing toilets are the result of a series of alterations and extensions to original outbuildings, which presumably housed the original detached ash pits. The original ash pits were constructed virtually at ground level with solid stone walls and concrete floor without damp proof courses. The subsequent extensions maintained the original floor level. Consequently, there are inherent damp problems. The change in level between toilets and the main hall is problematic for both access and storage. The available storage space is far less than that required. The Gents toilets are accessed through the storage area, with steep steps straight off the hall with inadequate landing.

Drains

Historically there have been problems with the general drainage systems. The foul water system is connected to the main drains in the main road, but has periodically blocked requiring rodding. The surface water drainage seems to be to a soakaway system. Recently the committee commissioned a drain survey. This has revealed that the drains have settled and are without an adequate fall. It is also unclear where the gent's urinals are connected.

Building services

The electrical, heating, domestic hot and cold water installations are inspected annually and appear to be in a fit state for use.

The hall's audio-visual system is currently being up dated. This is principally used by the Film Club.

Internet connection was recently completed to the Hall.

Decoration

The decoration to the toilets and external joinery to the main building has been greatly improved following the generous efforts of volunteer assistance. However, the underlying problems with damp will inevitably give rise to deterioration of finishes.

The interior of the main hall and supper room is in need of upgrading.

Kitchen

The Kitchen was refurbished relatively recently and is in good condition. White goods include cooker, fridge, dishwasher, water boiler and hot cabinet.

The kitchen is well provided with cutlery and crockery.

Storage

Principal storage is provided in the rear toilet block and is used mainly for tables, chairs, crash mats and larger toys. The mens toilets are accessed through this storage area, which is far from ideal. Tables and other stored items have to be carried up a narrow set of steps which makes set-up and clearing away awkward.

Chairs tend to be stored in the main hall for easier set-up, but have to be removed into the toilet corridor for activities such as badminton.

There is a bank of storage cupboards at the east end of the main hall for a portable stage and for the use of individual clubs.

There is a bank of metal cabinets in the committee room, which reduces available space.

Summary of required improvements

Joinery repairs necessary to the eaves and lantern.

Drainage issues need to be addressed.

Storage improved.

Toilets improved.

Improvements to the audio visual system.

Critical Assessment of the toilet block undertaken on December 3rd 2012

Gents toilet.

- Steep steps down into cloak room
- Landing is insufficient length if someone comes into the cloak room from the main hall
- The current storage area off the gent's toilets was originally a cloak room, however, this use has been curtailed: incompatible uses.
- Stacked chairs are difficult to access due to other stored items
- Manual handling of all stored items
- Toddler play equipments needs to be moved before tables or chairs can be accessed
- Head height is below building regulations in gent's toilet

Ladies toilet

- A support beam is below building regulation height.
- Dampness causing patches of plaster and paint to fall off.
- Dark and in need of refurbishment.
- Mirror silvering wearing off.

Appendix 2: Response to Hall Survey

See Commemoration Hall website.

Appendix 3: Competing Venues

While there are a number of alternative local venues, it should be borne in mind that the nearest comparable venues (ie village halls) are situated at least 4 miles away so require the use of a car, while for those residing in or near the village the Hall is accessible by foot.

Slaley Hall Hotel (1 mile from Slaley Village) with its golf courses, conference centre, wedding venue, bars, etc. This is an attractive venue for family occasions: birthdays, weddings, etc. However, it is relatively expensive.

Healey Barn (5 miles)

A recently opened wedding venue, which is proving very popular. Also relatively expensive.

Whitley Chapel Village Hall (4 miles) offers comparable facilities to Slaley CH, though the hall is slightly larger and has a bar area just off the hall. Discussing the use of Whitley Chapel Hall with their committee, it would seem it is subject to similar difficulties as Slaley Commemoration Hall: generally under used with limitations in raising revenue to keep on top of repairs.

Riding Mill (5 miles) has two halls, the Parish Hall and the Millenium Hall. Both are in good condition, the latter built in 2000. The parish hall is a more traditional hall complete with stage and is a good venue for performance, concerts, etc. The Millenium Hall is a smaller, more intimate hall used predominantly by clubs, etc.

The **Rose and Crown** and **The Travellers Rest** are public houses with bars, dining areas, etc. However, neither have facilities for larger gatherings or clubs. They do have their own clubs: darts, quoits, etc. which are more appropriate for pubs and do not compete with the Slaley CH.

Blanchland Sports Club (6 miles) is a smaller venue which can accommodate up to 50 people. www.blanchland.org

St Johns Church Hall, Snods Edge (7 miles) is well used by its local population and neighbouring Shotley Bridge & Consett communities. www.thesnods.org.uk

Barley Hill Hall, was a small community hall located 4 miles from Slaley Village but has recently been converted into a house.