

Annual Report of Claxton Parish Pit Charity May 2020

Membership during 2019/20

David Bissonnet, Chair and independent member
Pat Clare, Secretary and Chair of Parish Council
Mike Balmer, Treasurer, Independent member
Paul Carter, representing Claxton Church
Jason Cantrill, Parish Councillor
David Hamblin, Parish Councillor
Kevin Parker, Independent member representing Ducan's Marsh
Sarah Kennedy, Parish Councillor

Introduction

Claxton Parish Pit Charity (the Pits Trust) is a registered charity 243172. The Trust receives income from three regular sources; Ducan's Marsh, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, for which grants are received from Natural England as well as grazing rent; Number 3 The Warren, a semi-detached house in the village which is let; and a share of the income from the solar panels on the Village Hall which were funded by the Trust.

The area north of the Street, formerly allotments and now a community orchard is leased from the Claxton Manor Estate and administered by the Trust on behalf of the Parish Council. There will be no income to the Trust from this source.

There are two irregular sources of income - the wayleave payment for the mains electricity pylon that is in the corner of Ducan's Marsh and the lease payment for the Environment Agency water level monitoring stations on Ducan's Marsh. The EA lease is being renewed in 2020 but has been delayed by the Coronavirus lockdown, and the Pylon wayleave which dates from 1930 is being reviewed to ensure that it is up-to-date.

Subject to payment of expenses (maintaining the properties and meeting all other outgoings payable in their respect, and charges and expenses incidental to the administration and management of the charity) the Trustees are to apply the income of the charity for the charitable purpose for the general benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Claxton. (Quote from Charity Commission).

Governance

The Governing Document of the Claxton Pit Trust follows a standard Charity Commission model and is available on the village web site for all to read. N.B. Trustees are not remunerated and do not claim expenses.

The Trustees have been advised by the Charity Commission that the following guiding principles should be followed:

- That the funds be targeted rather than shared generally;
- That the funds be applied in support of existing statutory benefits such as social security to avoid loss of benefits; and
- That the funds be used where other funds are not available.

In addition, the Trust has established the following principles:

- up to £2,000 pa available annually as a bursary for educational purposes, up to £500 per case for assistance to the elderly or anyone incapacitated, to help with maintenance of properties excluding any capital works, and up to £100 per annum towards the cost of hospital visits to family. In addition, any other requests will be considered by the Trustees, who will hold the information in confidence.

Following these principles, the Trustees have sought to benefit the parish and parishioners.

This report summarises the activities in 2019/20.

The Trustees have prepared an appropriate Cyber Security and Fraud Policy based on Charity Commissioner advice and the current good practice of the Trust.

Meetings

The Trustees have met five times in 2019/20, as well as once by email in March following the Coronavirus lockdown, to ensure management of the assets, and review requests for assistance and plans for the expenditure of funds. Trust meetings are suspended until the lockdown ends but the Trustees maintain contact through email and the day-to-day to day management of the Trust continues in this way.

Finance

The Treasurer prepares a financial report for each meeting showing income and expenditure. The Trust is required to have enough reserves to meet any likely shortfall in income and the target of two years' expenditure has been set. Accounts are provided annually to the Charity Commission.

The Trustees have rebuilt the reserves of the charity following the refurbishment of 3 The Warren and have now met the target level of reserves and which will be maintained for the future. The Trust has adequate income to meet its obligations and commitments.

Assets

No 3 Warren - This is the primary asset of the Trust. It was refurbished in 2015-16 and is let through professional property managers. We are pleased with the continued tenancy to a young family. Additional remedial work has been carried out in 2019 and 2020. A specialist Fire Safety inspection was carried out during 2018 and the recommendations in the report have been implemented.

Ducan's Marsh - Under the agreement with Natural England, we are subject to Higher Level Stewardship management which while providing grant income requires us to pro-actively manage the site in line with their guidance. The South Yare Wildlife Group has continued to provide support with volunteers taking part in working parties and organising a very successful open day for the village and visitors. Kevin Parker and Paul Carter have played the lead roles, liaising with Natural England and coordinating the working parties. The maintenance, access and enhancement of the site including installing bird boxes has been carried out by them and by volunteers supported by the Trust and the site is now much better known, used and enjoyed by the village. The Trustees agree funds to be expended each year on maintaining and developing this important wildlife area.

Community Orchard - The creation of a community orchard as a suitable long-term use for the former allotments continues. A working party of Trustees cleared the accumulated rubbish from the area. Trees have been purchased and preparation for planting in the autumn will take place.

Solar Panels on Village Hall - These panels are proving to be effective and provide income which is shared by the Trust and the Village Hall Charity.

Requests for support

The Trust has not received requests during the year for individual support, for example education or training costs, or hospital travel costs. The Trust has reasonably wide discretion and can consider a range of requests for assistance in confidence through the chair or any Trustee.

Contact Care. The Trust agreed last year to provide the cost of the 24-hr lifeline emergency response service provided by South Norfolk Council through Contact Care. Currently three villagers are supported. All residents of Claxton are eligible, and the Trust welcomes further requests which are treated confidentially.

Speed Awareness Monitor (SAM). The Trustees supported with a grant the purchase by the Parish Council (shared with Langley PC) of a SAM which is used in several locations in Claxton on a rotating basis with Langley PC. The camera provides information on all vehicles passing through the village including date, time and speed. The information is put on the website and the plan is to work with Langley with Hardley PC on a joint approach to the authorities in due course.

Parish Council

The Parish Councillors are automatically Trustees of the Pits Charity. Mary Button stood down from the Parish Council at the 2019 elections. Mike Balmer was elected to the Council in 2019 but remains an independent Trustee.

The Accounts and Treasurer's Report

An unaudited financial statement is available on the Village website and notice board.

David Bissonnet

Independent Chair 6th June 2020