

East Harptree Theatre Committee

**Application to East Harptree Parish Council for a grant from
Community Infrastructure Levy funds - £9,115**



EAST HARPTREE
COMMUNITY ARTS HUB

1. Overview

This application is seeking funding for a Community Arts Hub (“Arts Hub”) in the village of East Harptree.

The Arts Hub is a new project developed and proposed by members of the Theatre Committee (“the Committee”) and other villagers in East Harptree. The aim of the Arts Hub is to increase access to the arts for local people, with particular focus on those on lower incomes and at risk of loneliness, through an “artists in residence” scheme.

It will support two emerging artists through the provision of subsidised studio space from which they can develop and produce their art and engage with the local community. It is proposed that it will be based in the upstairs space (recently vacated by East Harptree Nursery Preschool and Forest School) at the Village Hall (the “Hall”) in East Harptree.

The Hall was originally constructed in c1889 and has been used for a wide variety of activities prior to becoming the Village Hall and a registered charity under a conveyance dated 25 July 1949 (registered charity number 304536). The Hall is now managed by the Committee for the “recreational, social and educational benefit” of the people of the Village and its surroundings.

The project involves the following:

- Two emerging artists from the Chew Valley, Bristol or Bath, working in any artistic medium suitable for the space, will have access to the Arts Hub exclusively as their working studios, for subsidised rent.
- The two artists will provide regular, free and discounted workshops, educational initiatives and exhibitions targeted towards specific demographics.
- Administration will be managed through an “Arts Administrator” who would act as a liaison person between the artists and the people and community groups they will connect with.

The artists using the Arts Hub as their studio will work with groups such as the elderly, those with transport restrictions, those on low incomes and those at risk of loneliness. As well as holding events for the wider public, and groups such as the WI, Guides, Preschool and the School.

The Committee are seeking funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy funds for the first year of the project (with a targeted start date of 1 October 2023) to cover the rent for the space in the Hall, the cost of the arts administrator and specific capital items required to make sure the space is suitable for the artists. During this first year the longer-term viability and potential funding of the project will be reviewed by all parties involved.

2. Planned budget and timetable

The indicative planned budget is as set out below:

Rental for the space (£274 per month including electric, heating and WiFi)	£3,295 per year
Arts administrator (£15 per hour, 24 hours a month @£360)	£4,320 per year
Capital refurbishment necessary for renting out studios, including replacement of the fire door, new thermostat and painting of the space	£1,500
Total cost for the project over the course of 12 months (from 1 October 2023)	£9,115

Notes:

- The rental for the space is based on 659ft sqft @£5 = £3,295 a year. We believe this is a reasonable level of rent for the space and will help the Village Hall cover the costs of the maintenance, insurance, electricity, water, waste, hygiene and heating in the Village Hall. As comparatives Solo are currently paying £10 per sq ft, Preschool are paying £5 per sq ft and the Village Shop is paying £3.50 per sq ft.
- The costs of the part time freelance administrator are based on an hourly rate that is £5 more than the national minimum wage (see reference 2) and complies with industry standard (see reference 3).
- We are awaiting a quote from RH windows to reconfigure the door at the top of the fire escape to facilitate improved access to the first floor (we have assumed a cost of £800 in the analysis but this has still to be confirmed).
- We have a quote from Paul Watkin (local East Harptree decorator) of £550 to refresh the room with a coat of white paint.
- A new thermostat is required at a cost of £150 to ensure the temperature in the room can be controlled effectively.
- The rent and admin costs can be timed to be drawn quarterly in advance if that is helpful.

In terms of timing the key milestones are as follows:

May 2023	Hopefully receive a positive response from East Harptree Parish Council re CIL funding
June 2023	Marketing campaign and web page
June/July 2023	Replace door and decorate
July 2023	Web page live – begin recruitment of artists and administrator
31 August 2023	Deadline for application for artists and administrator
September 2023	Selection of artists and administrator
1 October 2023	Start of the Arts Hub

3. Fundraising

Given the level of funding required for the first year the initial application for funds is being made to the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The implementation of the project (including the construction and management of the web page) is going to require significant time commitments from members of the Committee – this time will be given free of charge as it is for the day to day running of this important Village asset.

The project will continue for a year, and within the first year we will aim to collect as much data about the audiences and artists as possible. We will record the details of the attendees and their narrative of the impact of the interventions, with their permission, through simple questionnaires filled out before and after the events. We will collate our anonymised findings and translate them into data that can be used for future incarnations of the project, for the Parish Council and for other groups working in outreach with these communities.

The findings will be made accessible on the soon-to-be-live web page as far as possible and if positive will be used as the basis of an application for Arts Council or other funding for future years.

4. Main proposal – the project

4.1 Context

In 2019 the Somerset Community Foundation (see reference 1) found that isolation and access to transport were significant issues for almost 4,000 pensioners in rural villages and that loneliness was high in young people who were also more likely to be working several jobs on a low wage. There are a considerably higher number of over 60-year-olds in the Chew Valley than the national average.

The Hall is a charity, run entirely by volunteers, and has significant maintenance and upkeep costs. Given recent investment in the downstairs space and the infrastructure of the building the Hall has limited financial reserves currently and needs to rent the upstairs space - it could potentially look to rent it out commercially but would currently prefer to use the space for a community initiative such as the Art Hub.

The grant requested will enable the Hall to make the space affordable for the artists, thereby allowing them to put on the workshops for little or no remuneration. It will also fund the role of the arts administrator (something the village hall cannot currently afford to fund), which will be vital in ensuring we access as far as possible appropriate demographics of people within the Village and the wider Chew Valley area.

4.2 The importance of Art in the Community

We note below some thoughts from the Eden Gallery on “Why is Art important”?

“Cultures unite through the arts to build better communities....”

“Art in rural communities can help boost economic growth.....”

“Art provides historical context.....looking at art from the past contributes to who we are. By looking at what has been done before, we gather knowledge and inspiration that contribute to how we speak, feel and view the world around us.”

4.3 The potential impact on our Community

The proposal invests in a core element of Village infrastructure and this specific space within it – to make it a fit-for-purpose asset to provide community benefit.

The Arts Hub follows in a rich tradition within East Harptree of providing access to the arts to the community, from the Harptree Festival through to the staging of Valley Arts events at the Hall. In the Hall’s mandate there is specific importance put on supporting villagers’ recreational, social and educational benefit. At previous arts festivals in the village free workshops were well attended by those in our target groups suggesting there is a demand for this kind of initiative.

It is hoped that creative workshops, lessons and activities will be attended by people of all ages and backgrounds either at risk of or suffering from loneliness where they will have the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and potentially widen their horizons.

This project will therefore help facilitate the following:

- Provision of creative opportunities to all members of the village community
- Connection with the rich history and geography of East Harptree – the Committee will encourage the artists to use and be inspired by the remarkable spaces and places in and around East Harptree, including the Church, the Coombe, the playing field, the Hall itself, Smitham’s Hill, Harptree Woods, the School and many more.
- Possibilities for connections to be made with other local arts groups, people and organisations across the Chew Valley and potentially even further afield.

4.4 Leadership and management

As a vital part of the village infrastructure, the Hall, through the Committee, supports various groups, through providing spaces for community activities and giving villagers access to the Hall and its assets for recreational use. The project offers the chance for the Hall to extend its influence and support by actively setting up an organisation that has its base at the Hall but looks beyond it into the community.

The Committee will take responsibility for the delivery of the project and for considering the future of the project beyond the first year.

4.5 Community support

The space upstairs has been vacant since September 2022 when the Preschool moved downstairs in the Hall. The space has been advertised for several months but there has been

limited interest to date. The Guides were interested for some time but eventually declined the opportunity to take it on.

It would be good to use the space for this community initiative as there has been a positive response from the people that this has been discussed with to date. If it is not possible to move this initiative forward, then the space will be readvertised by the Committee.

5. Conclusion and further information

Firstly thank you for considering this application. We believe that this project can have a significant impact on a number of levels and represents a positive investment in the infrastructure of East Harptree Village.

For further information please initially contact Daisy Bowie-Sell (Secretary of the Joint Management Committee for the Hall and the Playing Field).

Daisy Bowie-Sell

d.bowie-sell@hotmail.co.uk

8 May 2023

References:

- (1) <https://www.somersetcf.org.uk/new-report-reveals-the-stark-impact-of-rural-isolation-in-somerset>
(arguably just as relevant for BANES)
- (2) <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>
- (3) https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Salaries/arts-administrator-salary-SRCH_K00,18.htm