

**LOVER COMMUNITY TRUST  
REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN 2018-19  
AGM 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019**

This is the third AGM of the Trust and spans a period in which there has been considerable progress in developing The Old School and growing our financial stability and strength. For me it has also been a time when we have grown our social capital, the feeling of community spirit, cohesion and identity that small rural communities need if they are to remain places where really want to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To do this is no mean achievement and it is far from being the results of a small group of people. Quite the opposite, we are lucky to have the support of the widest group of residents and it is growing. I would like to welcome new residents to the village and to the Trust, some of whom are here tonight.

I would also like to take this opportunity tonight to express my personal thanks to all those who give their time freely to help us. First I turn to the Trust Board. We all know that it takes real effort to make a contribution at Board level. It is a significant responsibility and if there weren't such people amongst us then we would not have the community we enjoy today. To them all I say thank you from all of us. To Dave Bennett and Rob Easton who, with their team keep the building in very good order and help implement changes, identified by our good friend the Architect Nick Birch. Those changes in the near future are likely to be improvements in this main hall i.e. the removal of all asbestos, new large doors doors out to the Green, new flooring , extra toilets located off the corridor between the two major rooms and a professional kitchen incorporating the existing kitchen with the reception room next to it. In time we also need to address the main entrance to the building to give it a more obvious and welcoming presence.

To Rachel and Bill Jones and those they draw in to organise events such as the 5K and keep the Lover Green looking every bit the asset it is. Rachel also organises the cleaning rota and I wish to thank all those who take part. The building is always spotless. Thank you all. To Dave Charles as Chair of the Lover Green for his dedication and hard work including his input ( with Alison ) of the annual garage sale. To Mar Copp who runs our membership services and communications like clockwork and is of course very prominent in the organisation of the Safari Supper and many other things. This year Marilyn Dollard has taken on the unglamorous but essential task of committing us to policies that are written down and which underpin our work. All of us are kept in order and solvent by the sterling efforts of Peter Harper our Treasurer who probably has the most important task of all and does it with an assertive charm and skill whilst still smiling.

Whilst on the topic of finance I want to pause for a moment on a critical issue. One of the difficult things most communities face is funding fatigue. It is that incessant round of requests that you put your hand in your pocket to help to fund our activities. This is something that most communities face and it can become wearing. We are different. We are trying to attract money from outside the settlement and we are being successful, witnessed by the Lover Fayre, Chaired by Len Lunn, the 5K, the garage sale and most of all the Lover Valentine Post.

This year the Valentine Post was undoubtedly our best yet. Our appearance on BBC's Countryfile gave us a massive boost and in anticipation of that all the preparation we did paid off. A large group of people were involved and I think quite enjoyed themselves.

Absolutely central to the preparation were some people that I have to mention. The first is Ken Rayner our technical guru. We knew that the Countryfile effect would put massive strain on our website through which we do 90% of our business. If that crashed then we could lose a huge amount of money. Ken delivered and kept us together in that critical few hours immediately after the show. Second, the PR effort led by Katie Small who worked with the BBC and with abcnews to ensure we gained every ounce of advantage from the opportunity on TV, radio and all other media. To Mar Copp who organised and ran the team of Cupids and the pop up Post office through which we did more business this year than the two previous years put together.

The true spirit of the village was, of course, demonstrated by the way in which the Cupids came together to process the cards. They seemed to enjoy the task and judging by the clamour to get on the team it was a labour of love. Everybody noticed that during that whole period the village was decorated with hearts a fact commented upon by the BBC team. John Craven said he had never seen anything like it. Thanks to Vicki Field for her help in the organisation.

I will announce the estimated financial position of the Valentine Post at the AGM but in doing so I wish to thank the Post Office for their £3000 sponsorship and support which makes such a difference.

This brings me to my last and nonetheless important point. In this village we have very valuable assets. The Old School, Lover Green, the Village Hall, people with significant skills and energy willing to donate them to the cause and of course our name. LOVER. I have always said that this name can be and will be the golden goose. The means through which we can develop this building in the years to come and go on to provide activities and events of all sorts for all ages and abilities. But as with all valuable assets it is easily squandered and we cannot afford to get it wrong. We have set our sights on developing brand LOVER as a quality brand as our Unique Selling Point but this name could so easily drift the other way unless we keep a tight grip on it. Brand protection needs to be understood and maintained but can only be done if everyone is a part of it. So far so good. I believe we are all part of something special here.