

SE & BA Clague
Ballaclague House
Baldrine
Isle of Man
IM4 6AJ

7th December 2017

The Chairman
Garff Commissioners
Commissioners Office
New Road
Laxey

Dear Sir,

Re: Proposed All Saints Festival Church & Community Hall.

The Church was closed overnight without any discussions not even with it's own congregation.

The reason given was the Church was unsafe and falling attendance/congregation:

- It was incorrectly stated that the floor was ready to collapse. It has since been proved that the floors had been renewed by a previous Vicar and photographic evidence of works available. This has been further confirmed by RICS structural surveyor.
- It was alleged the electrical installation was unsafe. Since its closure, circuits within the church have been checked and passed as being safe following NICEIC Periodic Testing for insurance reasons. Its was claimed that it would cost £25,000 to re-wire the Church this was also incorrect. I have obtained independent estimate from a MACCS registered electrical contractor for £8,500 + VAT for a full re-wire including modern fire regulations etc.

The financial position of the Church when it closed was as follows:

- In the Church financial accounts, left by or to the congregation, there is £67,000 which is ring fenced to All Saints Church. This can only be used if the premises remain as a festival Church or Community Hall and open to the public including Remembrance Day. If the premises are sold privately, that money will be returned to the Church of England and leaves the Island. I also understand approx. £40,000 in envelope collections was transferred from All Saints Church Lonan and given to Christ Church, Laxey.

It is felt by many that this ICONIC LANDMARK which overlooks much of Laxey & Lonan should be protected. It houses the Archibald Knox War Memorial Remembrance Plaques in memory of the men and women from Laxey & Lonan who lost their lives in two world wars and should be kept for the benefit of their future generations. The memorials are a record of almost every

family in the parish. Many feel the Parish Church, where people of Laxey and Lonan's loved ones are buried, should have remained open.

I was asked as an elected Commissioner for the Lonan constituency to look into the viability and possibility of turning the premises into a Community Hall to serve the Lonan area. For this purpose, I asked Mr Tony Pass RIBA for professional guidance. Mr Pass is fully qualified Architect with experience in similar projects in England and is also past chairman of Manx National Heritage. He has volunteered his time and experience free of charge with the full knowledge of the Garff Commissioners. I also have never, whilst on the Commissioners, taken attendance allowance or expenses and as a personal donation, I have paid for a structural survey of the property. I obtained costings from independent local firms in order to convert the property.

The facility can be hired by the locals and people of the island for weddings, funerals and general community use i.e. play school children, parties, sports hall and day care nursery. This project has not been rushed, and has followed a systematic approach for nearly two years.

This Church is particularly suitable for this purpose as it is boxed shaped inside with a flat internal height ceiling.

The fire service have inspected the premises and are satisfied it will meet latest regulations. Planning have also been informed and passed the property for its new use, including parking. Our local neighbours are also keen to see the property back in use.

The hall would have been available for people of any denomination or none for funeral services etc, even if they only required it for shelter during intermittent inclement weather.

Project delivery

I have offered my time, free of any charge, to oversee and organise the work using local MACCS approved contractors.

As previously minuted, I believe that an independent Quantity Surveyor would be employed by the commissioners to oversee their commercial interests in the project.

The conversion works are to be completed by church/private pledges with no government/ratepayers money involved.

Structural Investigations

For proposed Community Centre, a full structural survey was carried out by John Gray Associates, a fully qualified firm of long standing and used by Government. This survey is independent and unbiased is covered by their professional indemnity insurance.

The report shows nothing major structurally wrong with the building and also, as with any property, a programme of work which could be carried out in future years.

Costing for Proposed Festival Church & Community Hall

Cost of proposed conversion £85,000 including 5% VAT. This cost is to be met from the money already ring fenced and belonging to All Saints Church £67,000 with the balance being met from pledges already promised by local residents.

All costings used to complete a bill of quantities. No quotations were ever asked for or given to Garff commissioners.

Lonan, Laxey and Maughold Commissioners (now Garff) already have money ring fenced for community projects in their areas, however, it is envisaged those monies will not be required for this project. Even a well known firm of lawyers have offered to do the conveyancing work, free of charge, as it was to have been a community project.

Operating revenues

There was to be no Government money involved or Garff rate payer's money in this conversion project.

I produced a business plan that sought support from the rates in order to cover anticipated startup cost. The clerk's calculation is that these startup costs would have cost approximately 3p in the pound on the rates except for Laxey rate payers, whose rates, after the formation of Garff, had their rates reduced by 8p in the pound.

Burial Grounds

The graveyard and all the surrounding land has no baring or cost implications on this proposed new Community Centre as all works and maintenance on the churchyard is already charged for in everyone's rates.

The hall would have been available for people of any denomination or none for funeral services etc, even if they only required it for shelter during inclement weather.

The Need for this Community Hall

Although the numbers of people living in Lonan is similar to Laxey, the new eastern development plan shows several fields close to All Saints to be developed for housing in the future. It has also been stated this project should not go ahead because it is not in Laxey.

There is a zero cost of conversion work on this project to the rate payers, the building is being gifted for the sum of £50.

Compared with, say, Ramsey rate payers, who are buying the Ramsey Court House with costs of around £500,000 and Braddan rate payers with their new development of £4.5m, this conversion would be cost neutral.

Most other parishes have the commissioner controlled community facilities that this project would bring to Lonan/Garff.

Recent Face Book Objectors

A group has been set up on face book solely to object and stop this scheme.

I have tried to set up a meeting with the administrator of the Facebook group to discuss any concerns. The person chooses only to use Facebook for his comments and he did not attend the advertised public meeting.

In conclusion, I do agree that I was passionate about creating a new Lonan Community Centre and saving this historical building for future generations. I firmly believe that it should be preserved, just like the other iconic buildings on the Island. This is a unique opportunity. That is to say, the building and therefore the "asset value" being gifted by the church to the community as well as the vast majority of the funds required for the conversion. It is frustrating that a small handful of unelected social media users are creating confusion to the points that have been discussed in great detail at both the public and the Commissioners meetings. These people are focused on potential liabilities not the value that the asset will bring to the community.

My wanting to promote the project should not have been misconstrued as having a vested interest and resulting in me being asked to leave the last Commissioners meeting. I state unequivocally that I would have derived no pecuniary benefit from this project. I would, however, have had great personal satisfaction in seeing this building upgraded and back in regular use.

In conclusion, if I am not allowed to represent the people that voted me into office, then the only right thing to do is to stand down so that another Lonan resident can take my place on the Garff board. I shall therefore be forwarding my resignation.

Yours sincerely,

S.E. Clague