

DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNISATION OF THE READING ROOM

Following the kind offer of the Reading Room as a gift to the CLT for the purpose of conversion into an affordable dwelling the proposition was discussed at length by the CLT Board at their recent meeting. The CLT itself does not have the funds needed for such a project and accordingly took advice from Middlemarch (formerly known as Wessex Community Assets Project) who have provided professional guidance. With their knowledge and experience in setting up over 50 CLT's in the Southwest they have the experience of dealing with Housing Associations who provide the funding from Government Grants and their own sources to build the houses.

Unfortunately, none of these organisations, just like Magna Housing, would be interested in a small single dwelling project and on that basis the Burton Bradstock Community Land Trust will have to graciously decline the offer.

Personally, I have a suggestion for the use of the Reading Room to develop it into a more valuable community asset.

The proposal is that the Parish Council develop the Reading Room into a work hub with 'hot desk' facilities. The individual desks would be upstairs with the meeting room for general hire retained downstairs albeit refurbished and partitioning off the access to the upstairs from the front door.

The disabled toilet which the PC originally agreed to would still be needed downstairs and a small kitchen area upstairs with one unisex toilet.

The CLT Board unanimously endorsed this idea particularly as it retains a historic village asset but at the same time would provide a service to the village and surrounding area. I have also sounded out several active members of the village who would be very supportive of the proposal too.

To put the proposal in perspective this is the link to the Co-Working Business Hub in Beaminster: -

<https://beaminster-coworking.co.uk/>

We have the funds, a large part of which originates from COVID related grants which were received on the basis the Reading Room has a rateable value and we need to be seen to spend some of our excessive reserves on visible and practical projects which can be of benefit to the village, particularly those of working age.

The next step, if the PC agree would be to arrange a visit to an existing facility such as Beaminster.