



Submission to

Marlborough District Council

Long Term Annual Plan

On behalf of Wairau Valley Hall Community Trust.

May 2021

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Purpose of Submission

This submission is:

1. **An acknowledgement by the Board of the Wairau Valley Community Trust (WVCT) of the ongoing support received from Marlborough District Council (MDC)**
2. **A request for MDC assistance in funding improvements to the existing Hall kitchen to develop it to a commercial standard suitable for the needs of the community**
3. **A request for MDC assistance to help fund the repainting of the Hall roof to preserve the whole facility into the future**



Figure 2 Hall Front Door



History

The original hall building was built by the Wairau Valley community after World War 1 and used for community gatherings, art performances, ANZAC day commemorations, indoor sports, club meetings, town meetings, dances, movie showings etc.

In 1997 the historic Hillersden Hall was moved to the same site and incorporated to make a bigger complex. This provides the community with two linked large halls, two kitchens, various bathroom facilities and side rooms.

However, as the needs of the community have changed, the hall has not kept up and its use has diminished significantly in the last two decades as many of its routine users dwindled in numbers and closed down (e.g. the indoor bowls club, girls brigade, preschool etc).

In parallel Board activity faltered due to lessening wider community interest and competing demands on Board member's time. Last year the entire board chose to finish their community service and step down. We thank them for their years of service.

A New Era

Fortunately, a new, re-energised small team of Board members (Michelle Seaton, Jenny Somerville, Lynne Grant and Kate Horrey) stepped forward, supported by a larger group of active trustees.

WVCT is charged, via its Deed, to promote the provision of community facilities for the benefit of the Wairau Valley community. As part of this we must:

- consult with residents on local community needs and priorities for use of community facilities
- promote the development of needed community facilities in the Wairau Valley
- manage and administer the hall and maintain it
- liaise with other organisations providing community facilities and advocate on the needs of the Wairau Valley community.



Figure 3 Volunteers at March 2021 Working Bee



WVCHT continues to believe that the hall is an important asset to the community.

It is the only large public gathering space in the area. Renwick is 27 kms away, Blenheim 38 kms and St Arnaud 65 kms. It also has value as a historic building and Peace Memorial. Good attendance numbers at recent social events at the hall, and informal feedback, indicates people value having a gathering place and community activities in the area.



Figure 5 Local Men Attending the ANZAC Day Afternoon Tea April 2021

Since September 2019 significant work has been done in practically tidying, repairing and maintaining the hall, in streamlining Board/Hall systems, processes and policies, increasing community use of the facilities and looking towards its strategic future.



Figure 6 Tina, our regular volunteer Maintenance Coordinator at work



Assistance from Marlborough District Council

We thank the Marlborough District Council Councillors and staff for their ongoing help in our endeavours to maintain and improve the hall. In particular, we appreciate the provision of an annual maintenance grant.

Changing Community Needs

With the increasing conversion of farmland to grapes in the Wairau Valley, the fabric of the community is changing.

Long established farming families are retiring or moving away, but more subdivision housing is being built within the township. The school roll has expanded (currently 54 students) and census data shows that the number of people living in the wider Wairau Valley area have increased from 1,692 people in 2006 to 1,936 people in 2018.

Other than the school and the local Wairau Valley Tavern, there are no other public gathering spaces between the Wye Bridge and the Waihopai Bridge - an area with more than 260 households. Newcomers to the district often mention their struggle to make connections with neighbours as more people live in the Wairau Valley but work, shop and socialise in town. According to the 2018 census date, 76% of the area's population work full or part time.

As in any community, there are those who are on low incomes, experiencing poor mental health, or battling with physical illness or disability. 15% of the population is over 65 years. For those that can not drive, there is no public transport. Often these factors affect people's ability to travel and socialise in Renwick or Blenheim.

We believe the hall provides a vital central gathering space. It has been a key part of social activities for over a hundred years and while the demographics of the Valley change, the need for local human contact and connections continues.



Figure 7 Locals Attending a Potluck Dinner January 2021



Current Hall Usage

Use of the hall is increasing.

At present regular bookings come from the Hall Board itself, the Wairau Valley Residents and Ratepayers Association, the local Tai Chi tutor and students, the Wairau Valley Newsletter team and a side room is used as a massage studio on a weekly basis.

A community afternoon tea to commemorate ANZAC Day took place in April which was enthusiastically attended by 30 to 40 locals, with requests to make it an annual event.



Figure 8 ANZAC artwork from Wairau Valley School Children on Display April 2021

The hall is also being utilised by locals for community potluck dinners and one-off large social functions (e.g. a recent Fire Brigade formal farewell dinner and two weddings), as a venue for REAP continuing education classes and also by out of town groups such as the Marlborough Caravan Association on its recent annual visit. A very successful local Art Exhibition took place in February attracting three hundred people over the weekend. Plans are also underway for a Country Women's Institute community dance later in the year.



Figure 9 ART Wairau Valley February 2021

Depending on the outcome of an upcoming local workshop with Catherine Coates, Group Welfare Manager for Marlborough Civil Defence and Emergency, the community and Board may wish to use the Hall as a possible unofficial meeting point/information bureau for residents after a disaster or emergency. At present residents



congregate at the Fire Station and officials there would prefer not to see it used as a social gathering point in such a situation.

Future Proofing the Wairau Valley Peace Memorial Hall

Two significant projects were identified by WVCT through a strategic planning process and consultation with community groups (Wairau Valley Residents & Ratepayers Association, Wairau Valley Golf Club, Wairau Valley School, the Wantwood Community Room¹) and local individuals via newsletter and social media.

Both projects will require significant funding in the future but would provide great benefit to the Wairau Valley Community.

In priority order these are:

1. Development of the main hall kitchen to a commercial standard.
2. Repair of the roof of the entire complex (Main Hall and Hillersden Hall).

We had considered a third priority, to develop a children's play area. However, the Wairau Valley School assures us the general public is welcome to use their extensive playground at the end of the same street, and we believe this meets our current needs.

Kitchen

The hall complex has two existing kitchen areas. However, the one in the Hillersden Hall has very limited ability to be upgraded without significant investment. For this reason, the second, bigger and more centrally located kitchen is the one identified for upgrade.

At present its facilities are very basic. There is a zip, a cold water tap, limited bench space, a domestic oven and some storage cupboards.

A recent visit from Karen Winter, Team Leader, MDC Environmental Health to seek her comment on the existing facilities resulted in a number of recommendations, the most pressing being the provision of hot water.

We propose a purpose built design upgrade including a better oven, a new dishwasher, stainless steel bench, extractor system/range hood, mobile butcher's block type work space and improved storage spaces. Initial investigations price this as being upwards from a rough estimate of \$35,000. We are in the process of developing a more detailed plan and costings.

¹ At the time of writing, formal consultation responses have been received from the Wairau Valley Golf Project and the Wairau Valley School both of which are supportive of the planned projects. More responses expected in the next month.



Figure 10 Partial view of South Side of Main Hall Kitchen

WVCHT believes that the hall requires a well-designed commercial kitchen for four reasons.

- 1) It would allow the community to easily host large events easily and maintain appropriate food handling standards.
- 2) It would encourage people (including those from the wider Marlborough area) to book the venue for their private engagements (children's parties, weddings, 21st etc) or club social events and bring in future hall revenue.
- 3) It would allow the hall to rent the space out during the week to local individuals or businesses, holding the appropriate food licences, to make and sell food from a commercial kitchen– bringing in revenue and supporting local business.
- 4) Other than the local tavern, there are no food vendors or public places to gather socially in the Wairau Valley area, we would like to see occasional or periodic 'pop up' café or takeaway businesses use the space to improve community socialising opportunities and bolster community connections.

Hall Roof

The hall roof is in need of repair and painting. This is essential to the ongoing maintenance of the hall. The current paint work was done in 1997 but is now showing visible signs of wear and flaking.

Late last year WVCT sought quotes for the following work to paint the roof, including preparation, primer, top coats to roof area.

- Quote 1 including travel, labour, material and product - \$25,265.50 GST incl
- Quote 2 including scaffolding and paint - \$32,611.90 GST incl
- We are in the process of receiving a third quote from a painter who lives locally.

A well maintained roof is essential to the long term maintenance and use of the hall but this amount of money will require outside funding assistance.



Summary

MVCHT is proactive and working hard to preserve and enhance the hall facilities for future community use.

However, we are only a small group with limited resources. Our plan is to increase use of the Hall for the social benefit of the community while also raising funds for operating costs, through hall user charges, where appropriate.

The kitchen project is our main priority for which we ask for MDC help to progress. We will be seeking other grant funding to help with these, and the other projects. Our access to pub charity funding is limited due to our remote location but we plan to approach the Rata Foundation and, potentially, the Lotteries Community Facilities fund.

The hall roof painting project is a costly maintenance project which the Hall Board will need to plan and budget for. We would appreciate MDC considering help with this in the future also.