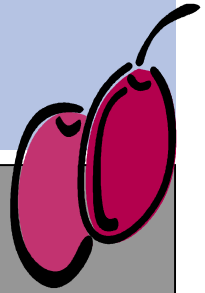


As one door closes, another opens invitingly for us...



AS SO often in the long, troubled story of the fight for Puddletown Library, there's good news — and there's bad.

Let's get the bad news out of the way first, as there is less of it this time. You've probably heard that when Dorset County Council was given the chance to think again about its plan to stop funding our library, it used the opportunity to show its determination to do so. The second vote last month was 25-14 so we are now definitely on our own.

The good news is that even though it is so determined to cut what it spends on our library, the county's library service has spelled out in more detail the help it is to give us so that we can run it for ourselves.

'We are greatly encouraged by the very positive and helpful attitude we encountered when we met Dorset's library manager, Tracy Long, last week,' says long-serving library volunteer Roy Bennett. 'She confirmed the council's offer to continue to supply the books we will need to be a credible library. More importantly she gave us hope that we can widen our activities.' Roy believes that along with Tolpuddle

and the smaller surrounding villages, the Puddletown community can make the library building into a real asset for all local people, not just our readers.

'Although there is still a lot of talking to be done,' he says, 'it does seem clear that the library service will let us develop the opportunities the building offers well before the official hand-over date. We are hopeful that before the summer we can use our

legion of new volunteers (*see overleaf*) to open the building every afternoon as well as on Saturday mornings.

'We have yet to finalise what other services we can offer, so bright ideas will be needed at our annual meeting next month. The great thing is that it looks as though we can provide a meeting place that is free, welcoming and always open when so many others in rural areas are having to close their doors.'

PLUM

The Newsletter of the Friends of Puddletown Library December 2011

Here's an important date for your new diary...

Monday 23 January at 7pm
in the
Church Room, Puddletown

when the Friends will hold our annual meeting. As there is so much to discuss and decide this year, please make every effort to be there. There'll be elections, of course. In particular we will need to find a chairman to replace Mike Chaney, who says his increasing immobility is limiting his usefulness. He'll be doing some backroom work so we won't lose his drive completely.

More importantly we will need to put some flesh on the bones of the deal that our management team are hammering out with the county's library service (*an outline of which is covered in the main report on this page.*)

There will be much to do before we take over the library. Your two penn'orth and your ideas will be needed. Please be there to have your say if you possibly can.

We'll need your subscription even more in 2012. We'll need more in our kitty as we take on the cost of the library's bills for ourselves

Stepping up and being counted

LIBRARY-LOVERS from our community have responded magnificently to the news that if we want a library here we must run it for ourselves.

At village meetings in both Puddletown and Tolpuddle there was almost a rush to apply to be trained as library volunteers: 28 extra people are either being trained now or will soon start training.

'This most encouraging response has strengthened us in our negotiations with

the county council,' says Stephen Buck, who as well as being the Friends' treasurer is also chairman of the parish council. 'When we explained that we needed to get our new volunteers busy or they'd lose their enthusiasm, the library service offered to train them well ahead of its plans for other community volunteers.

'This means that, with any luck,' says Steve, 'we can begin to extend the hours which this facility can be open, perhaps by summer.

'As the building will quickly become much more than just a library we will need a new title for the place. The best suggestion so far is "Swop Shop" but I'm sure we can do better — with your help.'

Anyone with a taste for paperwork?



Not only must we replace Mike Chaney as our chairman but, as he's also been our 'acting' secretary for the past four years, we'll also need to find someone to look after our paperwork for us. If you are willing to give it a go, please call 848352 and we can get your name on the nominations list for the AGM.

It'll all need to be paid for, of course

All the enterprising ideas we come up with to develop wider uses for our library will, of course, need to be paid for. Even though the Friends' managers have been very successful in raising money from local funding organisations*, the backbone of our finances is the subs of our members. So please send your 2012 fivers (*couples £8*) to treasurer Stephen Buck at 3 High Street, Puddletown DT2 8RT. If you pay by cheque please make it payable to the Friends of Puddletown Library.

**THANK YOU NOTE: We very gratefully acknowledge this year's gifts of £150 from the Puddletown Carnival Committee and of £200 from West Dorset District Council's markets fund. This valuable support has enabled us to pay for the broadband subscription we need to provide our free computing instruction.*

Our noble friend, Lord 'Downton Abbey'

The Oscar-winning local writer Julian Fellowes, Lord Fellowes of West Stafford, has not only spoken out on behalf of all Dorset's libraries but he has commended the way people here are working to keep our library open. When he came to open the

Piddletown Fair he told a big crowd in The Square, Puddletown, that we set an example to the whole country. In a letter to the leader of Dorset County Council before the November vote he praised our efforts in his appeal to all councillors to go on

funding all the county's libraries. His appeal was not heeded, however, by our own councillor David Crowhurst. He not only did not support us, he also failed to stand up for his own plan which would have spared all 34 county libraries.



Julian Fellowes speaking in The Square, Puddletown

If you have an email address, please send details to chaneatley@tiscali.co.uk. Emailing our newsletter saves on postage — and our distributors' weary feet...