

The Editor,
North Somerset Times,
Weston-s-Mare

July 6, 2018

Dear Sir,

I came to Congresbury 40 years ago from Clevedon, intending to return there when I retired. Once I had lived here a short time, I knew I did not want to live anywhere else, because it is a friendly, vibrant village, with massive community spirit. Where has that community spirit gone? We now have the opportunity for a modern village hall, with all the amenities to cope with activities in a village of this size.

Twenty years ago, I was asking at annual parish meetings why we did not have a hall like Kingston Seymour and Claverham, when we had a larger population. The answer was that it needed a dedicated group of people to put in the time and energy to make it happen.

Those people came along and, after much hard work, they have achieved a Community Right to Build, which is extremely rare, and virtually gives planning permission for the hall. Now, they need the support of the residents to make the plan become a reality.

Every house in Congresbury has received all the details and residents have been asked to make a pledge to donate towards the hall. The response has been pathetic!

The village has a population of some 3,500, and, so far, 30 pledges have been received. A minimum of £250,000 needs to be pledged, in order to apply for grants, and if that total is not reached by the end of July, the village hall will not become a reality.

I have just visited Isleham, near Cambridge, and saw the new village hall they had built in 2010 costing over £1 million. Isleham is half the size of Congresbury, with two shops, 3 churches and a couple of pubs.

The Beeches Community Centre was built with a Lottery grant and local donations, and incorporates a huge main hall, superb kitchen facility, meeting rooms, changing rooms and storage for all the village sporting activities (cricket team, 3 football teams), children's play area, a bar every evening and a cafe mornings.

The centre is used by the W.I., Book groups, the Parish council, as a wedding venue, for children's parties, conferences, plays, and social events, and currently breaks even financially. The parish precept was increased to contribute towards running costs.

Is Congresbury going to miss the chance to have this sort of facility? I do not have children or grandchildren who will reap the benefit, but I have pledged because I love this village and want to contribute towards a legacy for future residents.

Wake up and make your pledge!

Marion Johnson