



The purpose of this Report is to update Members on the Boniface Fields project.

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**No. DETAILS**

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**1) LEASE**

- a) The Isle of Wight Council's Legal Officer Heather Legood has confirmed in an email of 1 March that *the Council's notification of the class consent application for this site has been noted and approved by DfE. I am drafting this lease but have raised queries with my client that I am waiting a response on.*
  - b) Heather has confirmed that it will now have priority.
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**2) SIGN DAMAGE**

- a) The sign indicating that drivers leaving the site should turn left has been damaged and cut off from its base.
  - b) After exploring the possible connection with the recent nearby roadworks the Assets and Services Working Group has agreed to its replacement.
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**3) VENTNOR COMMUNITY SHED**

- a) Two members of the Shed, its secretary David George and Committee Member Phillip Warren, attended the Assets and Services Working Group meeting of 2 March to present a summary of the Shed's activity and proposals for future developments on the site.
  - b) Their presentation is attached to this Report for Members' information.
  - c) With a membership now of 51 they hope to restart activities outdoors on the site from 5 May.
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## **Ventnor Community Shed - Status and planned developments 2021**

### **Introduction:**

Ventnor Community Shed (VCS) is currently closed due to the third pandemic lockdown. At the time of writing VCS has 51 members and is run by the members with guidance from a committee of five which includes a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary.

There is also an increased community interest with requests for our engagement with new projects. These are explored in more detail later below.

### **Background:**

Ventnor Community Shed (VCS) is an unincorporated organisation whose purpose is to provide recreational and practical facilities to advance the social needs, health and well-being for people of all backgrounds and abilities who are living on the Isle of Wight and who are 18+ years of age.

VCS currently occupies a Portacabin belonging to the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) which is situated at Boniface Fields, Leeson Road, Ventnor, IOW. The occupancy, which commenced in January 2018, is currently recognised as a Tenancy at Will with IWC, the offer of a lease with Ventnor Town Council (VTC) is anticipated in the near future.

The main Portacabin (P1), a previously disused classroom, has been modified to provide a fully equipped woodwork room and a smaller “clean area” which is used for the assembly and finishing of projects. There are also toilets and a small kitchen/social area.

In order for membership to increase it is essential that VCS expands both its range of activities and floorspace. Having considered various options the VCS committee will recommend to its members the construction, by them, of a building constructed of recycled wooden pallets. This will bring a number of benefits, not least the ability to fully reconfigure our present available workspace enabling a more efficient use of facilities. The building will be both economical (pallets are free and readily available), flexible (it can easily be extended if necessary) and ecologically innovative (it would be constructed almost entirely from recycled materials).

There is a growing recognition that VCS has the potential to provide an important community focus and represents a valuable resource which can be further developed.

Informal discussions with Dr Oommen John of Ventnor Medical Centre have indicated that VCS could play a significant role in improving community health and wellbeing through being a host for social prescribing.

To encourage new members it was decided in 2020 to reduce the annual shed membership fee from £25 to £10.

## **Community Ethos:**

The change of title to Ventnor Community Shed which was agreed at the 2020 AGM reflects the belief that there should be a stronger community focus for our activities. It is evident that Portacabin P3 is underused and would provide an ideal venue for small groups to meet for discussions and instructional activities.

It is significant that VCS is part of the larger development at Boniface Fields. There are now 25 small allotments on the site and a further three Portacabins belonging to VTC have been put to a variety of uses. One of these (P3) is designated as a community facility and as such is available to VCS. The existing kitchen/social area in P1 is currently being re-sited to the Community Cabin (P3).

The VCS Committee has, pre-lockdown, regularly used P3 for its monthly committee meetings. The space is ideal for small public meetings and workshops. An essential future requirement to support instructional workshops and meetings would be the availability of a television screen and access to broadband.

## **Future developments regarding use of space :**

There is a wide and varied base of expertise, skills and interest on offer within the membership to support all of the new initiatives. The Shed Committee recognises that there is an urgent need to reorganise the work areas and also to improve disabled access.

### **Main work area (P1):**

At the current level of activity it has become apparent that a significant proportion of the work conducted generates excessive dust and noise. Additionally it is evident that in order to comply fully with health and safety guidelines clearly dedicated machine spaces and work areas are needed and that all have good access. All of the electrical equipment currently in use has been PAT tested to comply with electrical safety standards.

### **Side room work area:**

This will be dedicated to the assembly and finishing of repaired or renovated items of furniture; with the door closed it is sound isolated. It can be more easily maintained as a cleaner area than the main workshop, and better suited to assembly and staining, varnishing and painting activities.

### **Dark room (P1):**

It is planned that the existing kitchen and social area will be converted into a dark room for the processing and printing of photographic papers and emulsions. Three members have offered to donate equipment and around one quarter of the membership (12) have shown an interest in its use. The facility will be used for the support of both individual and community projects, for example photographic exhibitions.

**Disabled access:**

The increased use of the Community Cabin (P3) and also the arts space (P2) requires provision of a slope access between P2 and P3 to enable full access to both. This work has now become a priority as the existing stairway has exceeded its useful life with many of the treads becoming rotten and unstable. A temporary repair has been made for two treads that had failed and plans are drawn up for a replacement structure.

**Reopening and use of available space.**

We hope to reopen VCS on 6th April. Government guidelines will dictate this but we are optimistic that outdoor work at least could recommence on this date.

**Portacabin P1:** Ventnor Community Shed, Woodworking shop, Furniture upcycling, Pallet recycling, Darkroom, Toilets.

**Portacabin P3:** This portacabin is for community use and would be administered by VTC. We understand that this area would be available to VCS members during our opening hours. This will provide an important social space for members and with the imminent installation of a kitchen unit will enable the small kitchen in P1 to be repurposed for the darkroom project. Meetings, public talks and workshops should also be accommodated in this area. The VCS committee has agreed to donate a large flatscreen television to be permanently installed in this space. It is hoped that broadband will be enabled at some point.

**Outdoor projects :**Woodland / wildlife area:

Careful management of this area is already underway. We propose to install a pathway to allow full access for people using wheelchairs. Clearance of a path to enable access to the bridge beside the pond will be another priority. We are aware of the rich habitat and intend to monitor wildlife with the installation of an already acquired trail camera. Five nest boxes were constructed in early 2020.

Dinghy restoration:

The restoration of a clinker built Seaview dinghy donated to VCS by its original builders Warren's Boatyard of Seaview, Isle of Wight.

'Half-Boat' planter

Already repurposed and awaiting planting up.

Ventnor Library project:

Wooden 'initials' project for Ventnor Library's younger members .

Raised bed covers:

Covers for the allotment raised beds originally built by VCS for the Disabled Children's Team.

Pallet up-cycling

A number of shed members have shown an interest in the possibility of converting used pallets into functional items e.g. shelves and racking, decorative home items and small furniture items. To that end approximately 25 pallets have been sourced and delivered by a shed member and are now stored outside under tarpaulin waiting for the shed to reopen.

An expanded growing area for gardening:

The four small raised beds currently available to members have proved extremely popular, and immediate preparation of a larger growing space is envisaged on our reopening in April.

Community Art projects:

In collaboration with local artists Teresa Grimaldi & Sarah Vardy.

We look forward with confidence to the expansion of Ventnor Community Shed and the continued support of Ventnor Town Council in this collaborative project of genuine social value.

Ventnor Community Shed Committee

Steve McHale (Chair)  
Philip Hawkins (Treasurer)  
Leigh Geddes  
Phil Warren  
David George (Secretary)

22nd February 2021