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Update on the Temporary Closure of the Billingshurst Scout and Guide Hut.

I am very pleased to say that at last we are making headway to get the Scout and Guide hut back into at least some form of use, although we still have a long way to go.

Faced with a huge cost to recover from finding asbestos and completing the original project to install a disabled toilet and completely refurbish everything else, it has not been an easy matter to progress. As reported before in my previous letter, we have taken a multi-pronged approach to raising the necessary funds and have now been able to make a start on the work.

It became obvious to us that we needed to remove the asbestos as soon as we could as it was creating uncertainty for all and, in particular, it was likely to have a negative impact when applying for grants. We therefore decided that we had to proceed and by the time you read this, most of the asbestos removal will be finished. This cost has been met out of existing (non ring-fenced) funds raised over recent years, together with proceeds from the current 2011 'Save our Hut' campaign.

Our next step is to get at least most of the hut back into use and as many will know from recent press reports, we have been successful in our application to get majority funding for the original toilet project - the remainder again coming from our previous and current campaigns. As a result we have appointed a builder and over the next few weeks we will be sorting out the detail prior to commencing work.

When this is complete, we will have all but the main hall fully in use. The third and final phase is then to replace the main hall's ceiling and electrical infrastructure twinned with the need to replace items used by all units / sections that had to be destroyed (eg camping equipment, tables, 'Showtime' props, etc). For this final phase we have submitted applications for various grants and by their very nature, some will be fruitful, some may take time to know of their outcome, and there will never be enough money anyway! So, our fund raising campaign continues, please look out for the many events being arranged over the coming months. I would like to pay tribute to all those who have, and continue to be, involved - from organisers to participants.

As I said above, we still have much to do to be fully back up and running, but we are now on the way to reaching our goals. Thank you all for your understanding and support.

Richard Pope.

Chairman – Billingshurst Scouts and Guides Executive Committee.