

Elphin Community Hall.

We are the Grampian Speleological Group of Edinburgh, who have a major interest in the geological and palaeontological prehistory of Assynt, through exploration and study of limestone caves. We own a field centre in Elphin itself, which interfaces with the local community and serves as a hostel for members and visiting caving clubs.

Our engagement with the Community hall centres on its availability for lectures, illustrated talks and exhibitions that the Group put on from time to time in order to keep local residents informed of our activities. This is essential for many reasons, but especially for communication on all sides. Interested parties are attracted from as far afield as Lochinver, Ullapool, Scourie and Lairg which aids promotion of the hall to a wider catchment area.

When last used for the presentation of talks (October 2023), we filled the main hall to the extent that we almost ran out of seating, which gives an indication of how popular our topics were. Having a relatively spacious lecture hall nearby has proven to be a godsend, as no comparable indoor space is available in our own hostel.

There is no other facility within easy reach where such activities can be presented. If owned by the local ELKCAL group, there would be opportunities for better advertising noticeboards at roadside locations, which would open up the hall for even more regular and celebratory events throughout the year. There is no comparable location within a radius of some 20 miles and it has already proven to be a valuable asset in maintaining community relations.

From our side, it is beneficial to be able to participate in village events, which could be increased with local ownership invested in making a success of the facilities. We also consider local ownership fosters a sense of collective interest, which could develop even more social interaction across the district.

Alan L. Jeffreys, Founder and Recorder, GSG