

# Parish And Hall Committee Statement on Spellman Parish Hall

You will be aware that Spellman Hall in Kildavin has been closed since the summer of this year. We are aware that there are concerns as to why no explanation for its closure has been given. As the closure was the subject of court proceedings, we were legally constrained from public comment. These proceedings have now concluded, and the following is an account of what- lead to the closure of the hall and some indication of when it will be reopened.

**22/6/2022** In June 2022 a Hall Committee was set up by the Parish who are the legal owners of the hall, with a view to improving engagement with hall users. This followed an incident earlier in the year where external and internal locks had been changed without consultation with the parish.

**29/06/22** During a meeting with one of the hall users, the Hall Committee was advised that the wiring in the hall was in a poor condition and an electrician engaged by a fire consultant engaged by them wouldn't certify it.

**30/06/22** The Hall Committee contacted the electrician who was unknown to them having been given his name and contact number by the hall user and he confirmed he had concerns about the safety of the wiring.

**04/07/22** A second electrician was invited by the Hall Committee to offer an opinion and he corroborated the first electrician's view.

**12/07/22** The Hall Committee then closed the hall to further investigate the wiring and other issues and establish what action needed to be taken. The Hall Committee changed the external locks to ensure there was no inadvertent access by any hall user who held a key to an unsafe building.

**13/07/22** The hall user who raised the concerns about the safety of the hall was advised of this decision.

**14/07/22** In response to the Hall Committee's decision to close the hall on health and safety grounds the hall user advised legal action would be initiated if they were not granted access.

**22/07/22** The hall user initiated formal legal proceedings. The courts were asked to grant them immediate and unfettered access to the hall, and they also sought to seek a 21 year lease arrangement with the parish which would give them exclusive use of the hall or part of the hall. The Hall Committee supported by the hall insurers moved to defend their view that they had a moral obligation to keep users safe and to ensure that the hall in its entirety remained available to all potential users.

**27/07/22 & 29/07/22** Court hearings began. The judge allowed continued access to the hall of the user taking the action pending a written report from a suitable expert.

**29/07/22** The Hall Committee then set about getting the required reports. This proved difficult because of some unhelpful public comment.

**30/07/22** Electrician Inspected the Hall in Kildavin. A Notice of Hazard was issued. A copy was sent to the hall users' solicitor. In all three electricians and an electrical engineer examined the hall. All four independently agreed that the hall was in a dangerous condition and posed a real threat of serious injury or death to hall users. The report of the electrical engineer is attached to this statement

**13/09/22** At a further court appearance, the judge requested both parties to engage in mediation.

**30/09/22** A mediation session was held in Dublin and both sides agreed a way forward for the re-opening of the hall, after it was made safe and the hall user could return to the hall. It was a condition of the mediation that any terms agreed would remain confidential.

**11/11/22** The Hall Committee learned that the agreement would not be executed, and the hall user also wished to abandon their legal action. They had also taken the decision that they no longer wished to return to the Spellman Hall.

**22/11/22** The hall user formally discontinued their legal action at a Court sitting in Carlow.

- The tendering process for rewiring the entire hall is underway. This could not be done while legal proceedings were pending as the court had to adjudicate on the issue of exclusive use which would in turn assign responsibility for building maintenance.
- It is hoped that the hall will be back in use and safe by next summer. In relation to lessons learned the committee has decided that all future significant development of the hall will be overseen by a suitably qualified professional.

We would like to thank all the people who offered us their support during this period. We would also like to thank all the hall users who have been disadvantaged some quite significantly by the closure but who accepted that concern for the safety of users is of the utmost priority.

No hall user was evicted, and no notices of eviction served. The concern at all times was for the safety and wellbeing of the users. The hall committee believes lives are always more important than livelihoods. It would also be wrong of us not to acknowledge we had concerns about the hall or part of the hall being lost to the parish to whom it was bequeathed several decades ago

*Fr. Pat Hughes*

**P.P. Clonegal**

*John Hickey*

**Chairperson of Spellman Hall Committee**

## **Electrical Engineers Report**

A firm of Chartered Mechanical and Electrical Engineers were engaged to prepare a complete report on the current condition of the electrical installations in the hall. Investigations and tests were carried out to determine the current condition of the installations along with verification of compliance with electrical and fire regulations.

The electrical installations were generally found to be in very poor and, in some cases, dangerous and decrepit condition. Sections of the installations date from the original construction of the hall in the 1950s.

The following items were identified as posing serious safety risks to users of the building, as well as being contrary to electrical and fire regulations

- Multiple types of cabling comprising various conductor colours were used throughout the installations (red, black, grey, blue, brown, yellow & green). This indicates that multiple installations of different vintages have been carried out over the years. Existing circuits have been simply extended to provide new outlets in various parts of the building. Additional works and extension of the original 1950s installation appear to have been carried out at least four times over the life of the building. In many cases, the original 1950s cabling has been used as part of the infrastructure.
- A sub-distribution board is located above the stairwell at the front of the building in a highly dangerous, potentially lethal location. The distribution board serving the boiler room is in decrepit and dangerous condition.
- No external earth rod is provided to the building, which is a necessary requirement for safety.

- There was no evidence of equipotential bonding anywhere in the building. This presents a serious safety risk to building users.
- Earthing is compromised throughout the entire building with earth wires in a number of areas not being terminated. Earthing is a critical safety feature for the protection of persons in the building.
- Incorrect cable conductor colours have been used in many areas and the entire installation comprises of differing colours. This may have lethal consequences during any maintenance works especially where designated earth colours (yellow and green) have been used as live conductors.
- The entire lighting installation is in decrepit condition. Lighting luminaires are at the end or beyond the end of their economic life and the external lighting installation does not comply with current regulations.
- The emergency lighting installation does not comply with current regulations, IS 3217: 2013 - “Emergency Lighting and Amendment 1:2017 Emergency Lighting”. Notable deviations include lack of emergency lighting in various areas, inadequate emergency lighting (particularly in the main hall), non-compliance issues with the cabling installation and lack of external emergency lighting.
- The fire alarm system does not conform the requirements of “I.S. 3218:2013+A1:2019 Fire Detection & Alarm Systems”. The fire alarm cabling installation does not conform to the regulations.

- In general, it is the opinion of the Engineers that the entire electrical installation serving the building is in decrepit and dangerous condition and complete replacement is required.

# Photo Album













