

**WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM**

**MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD 1<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014.**

**1 Present**

David Easby, Michael Elphick, Adrian Hinchcliffe, Pat Johnston, Liz Stewart, Mike Wood and Volunteer PAT Testers - Matt Singleton, Denis Peel and Alan Brewin.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

Roly Taylor, Keith Robson, Margaret Weatherly, Pam Pryor, Georgia Shorrocks.  
Also from Volunteer PAT Testers Malcolm Brodie, Pat & Michael Stott, Alan Thompson.

**3 Annual Review of Portable Appliance Testing**

Matt Singleton the Coordinator of the Appliance Testing Scheme gave a short report on the operation of the scheme in 2013/14. He thanked all the volunteer testers for their continued service and devotion to the task. He said that the year had been characterised by poor communications which had made the scheme more difficult to co-ordinate. One of the outcomes was that the programme for the year was not yet complete and the 2014/15 round is about to start.

The Secretary had received an email from Malcolm Brodie who also made similar comments and also asked why it had taken five months to reimburse his travelling expenses.

There was a general discussion about these issues and how things can be improved in the coming year. The situation had not been helped by the unavailability of Mike Wood and the Secretary and the fact that four new volunteers started during the year. There was also a discussion on the need for two signatories for the issue of a cheque and how this could hold up the procedure. On-line banking was discussed but the Treasurer thought that it was not available for the sort of account that we hold and all agreed that there would need to be a secure way of authorisation involving two signatories rather than relaxing the internal controls.

Everyone recognised that all the testers and the officials are volunteers and the Consortium relies upon their commitment and generosity with their time, nevertheless, it was accepted that there is a need to improve communications between volunteers, the Co-ordinator and the officials.

Mike Wood talked through a number of changes that had come about regarding PAT Testing. Mike agreed to produce a simplified guide to the changes rather than issue a long technical paper to the volunteers.

Mike also reported on the renewal of the insurance. It had been necessary to change underwriters but after prolonged negotiations the premium had increased only marginally to £224. Mike was thanked for taking this on.

The question of whether we need to recruit more volunteer testers was considered. It was agreed that we do need to recruit one tester in the west and possible one in the east. Liz Stewart said that she would be available for testing this autumn which would get around the problem in the west. Denis Peel was also willing to take on a few more Hall in the east and this would enable Pat and Michael Stott's workload to be reduced.

It was thought that the Consortium should continue with the distance learning pack for new recruits and we should pay the testing charges when there was a need, rather than bulk buy in advance.

On the financial sustainability of the Scheme it looked like the scheme was achieving a surplus provided all the income is received. It was noted that the increase in testing rates had not been implemented but this would happen for the 2014/15 round.

Liz Stewart pointed out that seven of the PAT testing invoices had not been paid. The Secretary agreed to follow up on these.

Matt Singleton confirmed that he was willing to continue as Co-ordinator.

It was suggested that we should attempt to get all the PAT Testing volunteers together at least once every three years for re-fresher training and that this would also help with communications and create more team working. This was agreed.

Matt Singleton agreed that he would try to have better information on who is holding the testing sets but this depended upon people responding to his emails.

Finally, the Secretary congratulated all the Volunteer testers for the excellent job that they are doing. He said that the service is appreciated by members who were saving a considerable amount by utilising the service.

- 4 **Approval of the Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting held 02.06.14**  
The minutes were approved.
- 5 **Matters Arising from the Minutes**  
The position with Bouncy Castles in members Halls was discussed. Most members present indicated that they would not allow bouncy castles in their Hall's even if the company that hires them is now providing public liability insurance cover.
- 6 **Northumberland Energy Club**  
The Secretary reported that LSI had sent out the mail shot and immediately afterwards there was an increasing in enquiries. Pat Johnston mentioned that Newbrough Town Hall had accepted a quote from LSI but it was only marginally better. Pat also commented that there had been poor communications with LSI. The Secretary agreed to take this up with LSI.  
The Secretary reported that £46 commission had been received from LSI for the quarter ending 30.06.14.
- 7 **Web Site**  
Michael Elphick issued some statistics which showed that the average monthly hits on the web site had increased to 1,500. Michael had also developed a map of West Northumberland showing the location of member village halls and other community buildings. This was welcomed by the Committee and would shortly be uploaded on to the web site.  
Michael was thanked for his substantial contribution to the development of the Consortium through the design and management of the web site. It was again mentioned that the Consortium ought to be looking for someone to shadow Michael to learn the business of managing the web site.
- 8 **Membership Update**  
Liz produced a list of 10 members who she thought had not paid their 2013/14 subscription. It was agreed that the Secretary would follow up on the non-payers.
- 9 **Treasurers Report**  
Liz produced a summarised accounting statement showing total income of £2,204 and expenditure of £1,153. This indicated that the Consortium was heading for an annual surplus of over £1,000. The bank statement when received was expected to show a balance of well over £4,000.

- 10 New Initiatives**  
Progress with the New Initiatives was reported as follows:
- (a) Northumberland Energy Club**  
Mail shot has gone out and increase in enquiries reported.
  - (b) Insurance**  
The Secretary is preparing to do this.
  - (c) Valuation of Community Buildings for Insurance Purposes**  
To be taken up with the Insurance Companies.
  - (d) Quotations for Electrical Work**  
To move forward later in the year.
  - (e) Thermal Imaging Camera Scheme**  
It was known that Northumbrian University has a camera and have used it in the Tyne Valley. Pat Johnston had agreed at the last meeting to approach a contact he knows at the University to see if they would be interested in taking part in the proposed scheme.
  - (f) Safeguarding**  
To move forward later in the year.
  - (g) Licensing for Village Halls.**  
Members thought that it would be useful for the Consortium to have a guide to licensing. Members were often seeking guidance on the various aspects of licensing including licences for gaming. This would be investigated.
  - (h) Building Services**  
To move forward later in the year.
- 11 Members Training requirements**  
Louise Currie of CAN had provided firmer quotes for training requirements and she had shopped around to get the best value for the courses that CAN cannot deliver. A number of Halls in the centre and east of the area had offered their premises for a nominal fee. The Secretary said that he would like to accept the prices quoted by Louise and get the training moving. He would like it putting on during late September and October. He would also like Louise to do most of the organisation of the training. This was agreed.
- 12 Community Action Northumberland (CAN)**  
The strategic review to determine the future direction was now underway and was expected to conclude at the end of September. Already the outline of a way ahead had been identified and was to be tested. All clients would be consulted on the final proposals including the Consortium.
- CAN was partly using reserves to fund current activities and the Trustees had asked the staff to apply for suitable and appropriate funding. One of the proposed funding applications was a proposal to apply to the ESF Community Grants Programme to run a pilot scheme to assist unemployed people in rural areas to gain employment. This would involve using one or more village halls as a hub for improving skills of individuals and for connectivity and mutual support. Initially a ten session course was envisaged and if the pilot was successful this could lead to a larger project. Members were supportive of this development but pointed out that not many village halls are connected to the internet which would be a requirement. However, it was recognised that if village halls in rural areas become more of a hub for these sort of activities it would significantly help in providing the sustainability to make internet access affordable. Members could see that this sort of development could overcome some of the obstacles to employment faced by people in rural areas.

**13 AGM**

The AGM was fixed for Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014 commencing at 7.00pm. Newbrough Town Hall was suggested as the venue and Pat Johnston agreed to see if this was possible. It was suggested that there should be two main items;

- A presentation on the Hallmaster Booking System. The Secretary to enquire.
- A review of the law relating to employment and the use of contractors by village halls

**14 Succession Planning**

Pat Johnston made the committee aware that due to his change in circumstances he intended not to stand for the Committee at the AGM. Liz Stewart will also not be standing. There was a suggestion that we should be looking for volunteers before the AGM. Denis Peel made the point that the main officers should have shadows who could be learning the job and step in if needed.

**15 Date, time and Location of the next Management Committee Meeting.**

Proposed 5.30pm on 21.10.14 at Newbrough Town Hall – to be confirmed.

**Agreed as a correct record**

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**Date**.....