

WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

(A Self Help Group Run by Members for Members)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 12 MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2012.

1 Management Committee

(a) Membership

Chairman, Mike Wood. Tel 016977 47025 Email michaelwood111@btinternet.com

Secretary, Adrian Hinchcliffe. Tel 01661 843896. Email adrian.hinchcliffe@btopenworld.com

Treasurer, Liz Stewart. Tel. 01434 320481 Email walltown@lineone.net

Committee Members, Michael Elphick, Norman Hooks, Pat Johnston, Keith Robson, Margaret Weatherley.

All members of the Committee have acted in a voluntary capacity and do not receive any recompense.

(b) Meetings

The Management Committee met on five occasions during the year hosted by member Halls at Slaley, Corbridge, Newbrough, Shepherd's Dene and Slaley. A Special Spring meeting was held on 10 May at the Corbridge Parish Hall.

(c) Assistance from Community Action Northumberland

The Management Committee wish to acknowledge the invaluable support received from Louise Currie and Melanie Hall of Community Action-Northumberland.

(d) Other Bodies

We have worked closely with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium.

2 Membership

Membership of the Consortium stood at 62 at 30.09.12. The Management Committee are delighted that this number which includes six new members. There are now only a few other community buildings in West Northumberland that are not members and we would like to see them join to enjoy the benefits of membership.

3 Aims of the Consortium

In taking forward the organisation the Management Committee has established the following aims for the Consortium. These are included as a reminder to members.

- Derive financial benefits by using the bulk purchasing power of the Consortium.
- Derive financial benefits by joint purchasing.
- Offer an information service and resolving issues on matters relating to community buildings.
- Provide or initiate joint training for members.
- Lobby on behalf of members.
- Provide a forum for members to exchange views, ideas and best practice.
- Enable Community buildings to have a higher profile in the community.

4 Communications with Members

(a) Development of a new web-site

The web site (www.westnorthumberlandcbc.org.uk) was launched in 2010 and has become an essential tool of communications and working for the Consortium. We would like to thank Michael Elphick for designing and launching the web site and for continuing to manage it. We are gradually increasing the content of the web site to include many guides to different aspects of managing a community building. On average we are receiving 800 to 900 page viewings per month. During 2011/12 it has been used for giving information on the Consortium's PAT testing service and a new section for members to advertise items for sale or items wanted. It is available to all viewers but two sections are restricted to Members only by password. There is a complete list of Members on the web site and each Community Building is given the opportunity to give a full description of its location and facilities with view to attracting bookings.

(b) Newsletters

Two Newsletters were issued during the year in October 2011 and July 2012.

(c) Emailing of Information and requests

All but one member is able to receive information by email. During the year the Secretary has circulated members with emails covering all sorts of topics including information and requests. Sometimes it is a matter of forwarding emails received from other bodies. This is considered to be a very important aspect of the service for members and one that is being enhanced by placing important items on the web site.

5 Northumberland Energy Club

The Northumberland Energy Club is in its second year and we have evidence of members achieving significant reductions in their electricity and gas bills by obtaining a quotation from LSI Utility Brokers and taking out a contract. At 30 September 2012 28 contracts had been negotiated by LSI for Club members. The idea is a simple one, combining the buying power for small businesses and organisations to enable cheaper prices for electricity, gas and telephone to be negotiated. Membership of the Club is free and the savings could be huge, as all the members work towards a common renewal date. The first common date is the end of January 2013

and contracts have already been signed for a further two years. Those members have seen only a modest increase in their electricity prices which demonstrates the benefits of bulk buying.

The Club is not restricted to members and has been promoted to businesses and charities throughout Northumberland. The North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium is also using the scheme for its members.

6 Scheme for Portable Appliance Testing

In the Autumn of 2011 the Consortium launched its own testing scheme for the testing of portable appliances used in Members Buildings. Eight volunteers have been trained and certified to undertake PAT testing and the Consortium is to offer this service on an annual basis to Members. The volunteers to whom we are very grateful are:

Alan Brewin, Pat Johnston, Denis Peel, Matthew Singleton, Liz Stewart, Michael Stott, Melvyn Whatmough and Mike Wood

Two sets of testing equipment are used and the scheme operates on a non profit making basis. The testing equipment is re-certified for testing each year. The scheme offers the same quality of service and guarantees that are given by professional companies who offer this service.

Denis Peel has acted as Coordinator of the scheme. The first round of testing was completed by June 2012. During this round 43 members took the service, 1,905 portable appliances were tested with 64 appliances failing which had to be scrapped. In carrying out this service the volunteers have saved the members jointly around £3,000 in fees that they would have incurred in having this done professionally.

The 2012/13 round of testing is already underway and an additional nine members have signed up to take the scheme. Matt Singleton has taken over from Denis Peel as Coordinator,

7 Negotiation of Members Benefits

We continue to have a panel of five insurance businesses that will quote and arrange for insurance for Community Buildings. All companies on the panel offer discounts to members and some Members have considerably reduced their premiums by taking quotes from more than one insurer.

Enquiries have been received from members about whether the Consortium has any arrangements for the valuation of buildings for insurance purposes. None are in place but a circular to members identified some possibilities. These are to be considered in more depth.

The bulk purchasing of oil has been considered and whether the Consortium should have its own bulk ordering scheme. After consideration it was decided that our members are spread out too far to get any real benefit and it would be better for member halls to consider joining more local schemes.

The high cost of periodic electrical inspection was considered and ways in which benefits can be achieved for members. The Management Committee will return to this in 2013.

8 Lobbying and Other Member Services

During the period being reported the Management Committee has lobbied on behalf of members and offered the following information services:

(a) Lobbying

Discretionary Business Rates Relief. Note that members will have to complete a questionnaire before being able to achieve rates relief from 01.04.13.

(b) Hallmark

The Consortium supports the development of the Hallmark Scheme and is keen to promote it. In July a number of member Halls undertook Hallmark training with view to applying for Level 1.

(c) Health and Safety Policy

A model Health and Safety Policy has been developed by the Consortium working from a more voluminous document issued by ACRE. This document is intended to be a guide for village hall and community building committee members who may find the subject daunting. The document explains the key statutory requirements as they affect village halls and community buildings and how to address them. The document has been placed on the web site and the management Committee recommend that all Halls have a look at it and complete the model. At the AGM there will be two presentations on this policy.

(c) Advice

A number of documents giving information and advice have been placed on the web site for Members use. These are listed below:

- ACRE Village Information Sheets - listing & how to obtain.
- Village Hall Management Check List
- Safeguarding policies
- Insurance Guidance for Village Halls.
- Electrical Safety Testing.
- Guidance on Hiring out Equipment
- Renewable Technologies for Village Halls
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations
- Health and Safety Policy
- Sales and Wants

(d) Connect for Change (C4C)

A representative of the Consortium has attended some of the meetings called by the new C4C. The Management Committee is considering the relevance of membership of this organisation in view of the wide number of voluntary organisations that it covers.

(e) Concessions for Surface Water Drainage Charges

Members were prompted to apply for the concessions that were made available in late 2011.

9

Special General Meeting

At special meeting held on 10th May 2012 at Corbridge Parish Hall. The following presentations were given:

- The Hallmark Scheme – Louise Currie
- Insurance – Key Issues and Good Practice – Louise Currie
- Conversion to Incorporation and a Trading Arm – Norman Hooks
- Update on the Northumberland Energy Club and PAT Testing – Adrian Hinchcliffe