

WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

(A Self Help Group Run by Members for Members)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 12 MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2013.

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, Georgia Shorrocks (from 19.09.13)

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 Riding Mill, Newbrough, Stocksfield, Shepherd's Dene and Gilsland. The Spring meeting was held on 7th May at the Stocksfield Community Centre.

(c) Assistance from Community Action Northumberland

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

(d) Other Bodies

We have worked closely with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium and LSI Utility Brokers Ltd.

2 Membership

Membership of the Consortium stood at 62 at 30.09.13. The Management Committee are delighted that this number which includes one new member. All village and community halls in West Northumberland are now members of the Consortium with the exception of a number of small Halls.

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 1,000 page viewings per month. During 2012/13 it continued to be used for giving information on the Consortium's PAT testing service. It is available to all viewers but the section on Members Benefits is 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. A draft policy on Privacy and Cookies is being developed by Michael Elphick.

(b) Newsletters

One Newsletter has been issued during the year in February 2013.

(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 third 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 2013 35 contracts had been negotiated by LSI for Club members. The Consortium is now seeing a steady stream of income coming from LSI. 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 was at 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

This was the second year of running the Portable Appliance Testing Scheme. Forty three members used the scheme and a further five charities. We are very thankful and grateful to the volunteers for giving their time. They are:

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

The scheme operates on a non-profit making basis and the charges are to cover the following: certification of the testing equipment, insurance, travelling expenses of the volunteers, training and certification costs. 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. During the year a third testing machine has been purchased. The charge for 2013/14 has been increased to meet the costs of re-certification of the volunteers

Matthew Singleton has acted as Coordinator of the scheme. 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 by electrical contractors.

In the summer/autumn of 2013 an appeal was made for new volunteers and we are delighted that four people have stepped forward and offered their time.

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. During the year the Consortium received a very competitive quotation for the annual servicing of fire extinguishers and other fire fighting appliances.

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. The County Council's scheme is continuing.

(b) Hallmark

The Consortium supports the development of the Hallmark Scheme and is keen to promote it.

(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. The policy was presented at the AGM in 2012

(d) 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

(e) Connect for Change (C4C)

A representative of the Consortium has attended one of the meetings called by the new C4C with view to establishing the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly.

(f) PRS/PPL Survey and Charges

A letter was sent to PRS/PPL expressing concern at the level of charges under their licences.

(g) VAT on Energy

Guidance was given to members on the correct rate of VAT for energy and the parameters that apply where the rate increases.

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Spring Meeting

The Spring meeting was held on 7 May 2013 at the Stocksfield Community Centre, Stocksfield. . The following presentations were given:

- Charitable Incorporated Organisation – David Francis
- Remote Controlled Heating Systems – Adrian Hinchcliffe
- What level of Financial Reserves should Halls hold – Adrian Hinchcliffe
- Update on the Northumberland Energy Club and PAT Testing – Adrian Hinchcliffe

Due to poor attendance the Committee has decided not to hold the Spring Meeting in future unless there is a burning topic that members wish to hear about.

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Thermal Imaging Camera

At the suggestion of a member the Management Committee is investigating the possible purchase of a thermal imaging camera for use by members. This would be used to survey members buildings to identify heat loss and energy saving measures. More on this will be reported at the AGM.