

WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2009

BROKER DEAL FOR GAS AND ELECTRICITY PROBABLE SOON.

The Management Committee are in advanced talks with an Energy Broker for a deal for the Consortium on the purchase of gas and electricity. This should open up the way for members to have access to much greater purchasing power which should mean better prices. If the prices negotiated by the Broker are acceptable each member will enter into a contract direct with the Supplier. Payment and billing methods will be optional. There will be no charges for the services of the Broker. It is hoped the agreement can be concluded within the next few weeks and if so the Secretary will be contacting all members.

Negotiations for a Consortium Panel of Electrical Contractors

Negotiations are also underway with a number of companies who currently carry out electrical work in Village Halls and other Community Buildings. It is the intention to create a Panel of contractors who are willing to give benefits to Consortium members. The work they will cover is electrical installation testing, electrical system maintenance, emergency lighting maintenance and certification, fire alarm system maintenance and certification. The Panel will work similar to the Panel for Insurers. More details will be issued shortly.

Special Meeting a Great Success

The Consortium held its first Special Meeting on 13 May 2009 at the Newton and Bywell Community Hall. Eighteen Halls/Community Buildings were represented. The main item for the evening was a talk by Arthur Scott of National Energy Action on energy saving in Village/Community Halls. The talk gave general information on the simple and sensible things that can be done to reduce the amount of energy that is used. Arthur went on to talk about renewable energy schemes and their applicability to village halls and similar community buildings. Linking to this presentation was Colin Earnshaw of the Northumberland National Park Authority who gave a talk on the renewable energy schemes that have been installed in and around the National Park. Richard Austin followed Colin with a detailed run-down on the funding that is available for energy schemes of various sorts. Members were staggered by the number of sources of funds outlined. Richard offered to place members on an email list for the circulation of updated information on the various funds.

Consortium Annual General Meeting

The Consortium's Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 12 November 2009. Newbrough Town Hall has kindly agreed to host the event which will start at 7.00pm. **Please make a note in your diary for this important meeting.** The Management Committee will be arranging a speaker for after the formalities. Details will be issued nearer the time.

Consortium web-site

The Consortium is developing a web site which will eventually be an important part of communications. There will be a single page for each Hall to enter summary information about itself. It is also intended to develop the web-site to hold important technical information and there may be an area for members only, accessed by password, which contains members benefit information. Have a quick look to see how the site is progressing:

www.westnorthumberlandcbc.org.uk

Membership

Membership has grown to 44 which is very pleasing, yet understandable, when considering the benefits that members can achieve. The following are members:-

Colwell Village Hall Committee
Greenhead Village Hall
Bellingham Youth Education Centre
Prudhoe Parish Hall
Newton and Bywell Community Hall Trust
Byrness Village Hall
Minsteracres Retreat Centre.
Stocksfield Institute & Community Association
Whitley Chapel Parish Hall
Humshaugh Village Hall
Newbrough Town Hall

Riding Mill Village Hall Trust
 Slaggyford Women's Institute
 Slaley Commemoration Hall
 Hexham & Tynedale Community Trust
 Haltwhistle Social Welfare Centre
 Matfen Village Hall
 Corbridge Parish Hall
 Acomb Village Hall
 Dalton Village Hall
 Ovingham Reading Room
 Wark Town Hall & Mechanics Institute
 Allendale Village Hall & Recreation Ground
 Falstone Village Hall
 Haydon Bridge Community Association
 Simonburn Village Hall
 Allenheads Trust Ltd
 High Forest Community Association
 St John of Beverley Catholic Church Hall
 Featherstone Village Hall
 Wall Village Hall
 Gilsland Village Hall
 Wylam Institute Community Association
 Newton Hall Men's Club
 Birtley Village Hall
 Langley Village Hall
 Corsenside Parish Hall
 Ponteland Memorial Hall
 Blanchland Village Hall
 Old School, Ovingham
 Heddon Village Knott Memorial Hall
 Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall
 Otterburn War Memorial Hall
 Barrasford Village Hall

The Management Committee is aware that there are still between 15 and 20 well used Halls that have not joined. It is more likely that these Halls are not aware of the benefits that can be gained in return for an annual membership of only fee of only £10. If you are in contact with any Halls not listed above please publicise the Consortium.

Hallmark Standard

The new Hallmark standard is beginning to become known. There are now four Hall in Northumberland that have achieved Level 1. Insurers are beginning to take note of those Halls that have gained this standard for it indicates greater consistency in organisation which may be interpreted as lower risk. Level one is about demonstrating good practice in things like bookings, invoicing, book keeping, insurance cover and general administration as well as conforming to the requirements of the charities commission. The Hallmark scheme is run nationally by ACRE and administered locally by Community Action-Northumberland. For more information contact **Louise Currie**. louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk or phone 01670 517178

Working with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium

This Consortium enjoys extremely good relations with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium (NNVHC). We are constantly looking for ways in which we can work together and combine our purchasing power for the benefit of members. Mike Gowland Chair of the NNVHC recently

attended our Special meeting on 13 May and we are currently talking about a joint scheme for Portable Appliance Testing and Energy Purchasing.

MEMBER'S REQUESTS

The Management Committee welcome requests or comments from members on the work of the Consortium. Are there issues which need discussion or investigation? Are there activities in which members need more guidance or training? Are there costs where joint purchasing could result in savings? Can the communications with members be improved? These are all questions that we welcome guidance on. Please contact Secretary Adrian Hinchcliffe - adrian.hinchcliffe@btopenworld.com or phone 01661 843896.

Developing a Strategic Plan

The Management Committee are keen to develop a strategic plan for the Consortium covering at least the next five years. There will be a discussion on this topic at the next Management Committee Meeting which will be held on Thursday 13 August 2009 at the Newton and Bywell Community Hall commencing at 9.30am. All members are welcome to attend these meetings.

The Management Committee

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Electrical Safety and Testing

Many members are confused about the requirements for electrical safety and testing in village hall/community buildings. Mike Wood, chair of the Consortium, has spent time sorting out this issue with Louise Currie of Community Action Northumberland. They have produced a definitive statement which is shown on the next page and is also on the web site.

Electrical Safety And Testing In Village/Community Halls Etc.

The Electricity at Work Act 1989 states that all electrical systems and equipment used in the working environment should be in a safe condition. The Health & Safety Executive recommend that to comply with the regulations, an inspection and testing programme should be undertaken at all places of work.

The Electricity at Work Regulations place a legal responsibility on employers, employees and self-employed persons to comply with the provisions of the regulations and take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that no danger results from the use of such equipment. This in effect requires the implementation of a systematic and regular programme of maintenance, inspection and testing. The Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) places such an obligation in the following, circumstances:

- 1. Where appliances are used by employees.
- 2. Where the public may use appliances in establishments such as hospitals, schools, hotels, shops, community halls etc.
- 3. Where appliances are supplied or hired.
- 4. Where appliances are repaired or serviced.

The guide below is intended to advise on some of the basic requirements that fall on village hall and community building management committees to enable them to comply with these two pieces of legislation

The guide is by no means exhaustive and the emphasis must be on the word *guide*. Whilst every effort has been made to establish strict rules of law, the government and various authorities leave many matters open to interpretation and in some areas lay down guidelines only, not hard and fast rules of law.

There are however certain definite rules.

Fixed Installation Testing (FIT) involves testing the electrical circuits and systems that distribute electricity around a building. It covers all the hard wiring in a building, whether it is commercial, industrial or residential and includes community buildings. All electrical circuits in a building that are fixed, such as lighting socket outlets, air conditioning and other fixed plant need to be tested. **This must be done by a suitably qualified electrician at intervals of not more than every 5 years**

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) involves the testing of all non fitted and portable electrical equipment used in a building. Such items as televisions, video/DVD equipment, kettles, non hard wired boilers, microwaves etc. Basically any item that requires plugging in to a socket. It also includes any such items brought into a building by users.

There is no legal requirement for this to be done.

HOWEVER many insurance companies, leases and premises licences may insist on it (check your documents). Also in the case of community buildings, many organisations wishing to hire the use of a building may insist on this as a condition of their doing so.

PAT if carried out is normally required every 12 months and does not require a qualified electrician but may be done by a suitably trained person using the approved equipment.

In both of the above classes of equipment it is recommended that regular checks be made by “a competent person” at intervals depending on how frequently the equipment is used and the conditions under which it is used and kept.

With PAT it is recommended that this be done on a weekly basis in buildings where the equipment is frequently in use. However in both cases the check largely consists of the competent person visually checking for obvious potential problems such as loose connections, frayed wires etc. and the competent person may be any person, advisedly a committee or staff member, who is qualified to use the appliance.

This advice has been assembled from various sources including the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk and Village Hall Information Sheet 15 (Health and Safety Legislation and Village Halls), published by ACRE, both of which are excellent sources of further information on both this and many other health and safety matters.

Acknowledgement must also be made to Louise Currie of CAN who was responsible for much of the research.