

WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2008

SIGNIFICANT INSURANCE BENEFITS NEGOTIATED FOR MEMBERS

All members should have received the Guide to Insurance Benefits that have been negotiated by the Consortium with five companies. The discounts on offer are up to 10% but by obtaining quotes from all are some of the companies, it may be possible to significantly reduce your annual insurance charges. Some members have reduced their annual premiums by several hundreds of pounds. Shopping around is the key.

Membership

The Consortium now has twenty two members and it is known that many more have yet to meet to approve joining. The twenty members are:-

Acomb Village Hall
Bellingham Youth Education Centre
Byrness Village Hall
Colwell Village Hall
Corbridge Parish Hall
Dalton Village Hall
Greenhead Village Hall
Haltwhistle Social Welfare Centre
Hexham Community Centre
Humshaugh Village Hall
Matfen Village Hall
Minsteracres Retreat Centre
Newbrough Town Hall
Newton and Bywell Community Hall
Ovingham Reading Room
Prudhoe Parish Hall
Riding Mill Village Hall
Slaggyford Women's Institute Hall
Slaley Commemoration Hall
Stocksfield Institute and Community Centre
Wark Town Hall
Whitley Chapael Parish Hall

From the listings of Halls and Community Buildings in West Northumberland we believe that there are potentially well in excess of sixty Community Buildings that could benefit from membership. **Will you please urge those Halls/Community Buildings that you know have not yet joined to do so. At £10 per annum it is exceptional value.**

Management Committee

The Management Committee has met on three occasions the most recent being 16 September 2008.

The Committee is determined to make the Consortium bring significant benefits for all its members and considers that it has made an excellent start with the insurance deals that have been negotiated. Whilst Committee members see financial benefits as being very important they also recognise that the coming together of as a consortium can assist members by being able to discuss common issues, take up lobbying on behalf of members, initiating training and by obtaining up to date information on various issues facing Halls and Community Buildings. Members of the Management Committee are as follows:-

Mike Wood, Chairman. Tel 016977 47025
Email mike@woodsend67.freeserve.co.uk

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

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

Malcolm Caisley
Michael Elphick
Norman Hooks
Pam Niven
Pam Prior
Keith Robson

The next meeting of the Management Committee will be held on Wednesday 19 November 2008 at the Newton and Bywell Community Hall, Newton Village commencing at 9.30am. If any member has an item or issue that they would like discussed at the meeting, please email them to the Secretary to arrive by 10 November 2008..

Thanks to Community Action – Northumberland

The Management Committee would like to express its sincere thanks to members of **Community Action- Northumberland** who have assisted the Consortium in getting formed and established. Special thank go to **Alan Hedley, Louise Currie, Jane Hart, Sue Hacking and Shaun Hogg**. Without them the creation of the Consortium would have been difficult and unlikely.

Further Benefits for Members

The Management Committee has started investigations into further financial benefits for members. The things being looked at are as follows:-

Heating oil

Maintenance of Fire Alarms and Associated Equipment.

Maintenance of Emergency Lighting.

Portable Appliance Testing

Electrical Installation Tests

It may be necessary to find out more information about how members use these services. If so, members will be contacted.

Communications with Members

The Management Committee believe that the Consortium needs exceptional communications between the Consortium and its members. It exists for its members therefore there must be good two way communications with the ability of members to ask for information. To this end the Committee are planning on introducing two communication facilities. The first is this Newsletter which will be issued periodically, and the second is a web-site. In the case of the web-site the possibility of using a 'Rural Click' web-site as an initial development is being considered.

All members are being asked to provide an email address for contact. This is to enable electronic communications which will considerably reduce the administrative work for the voluntary officials.

Links with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium

Wherever possible the Management Committee will work closely with our sister organisation the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium. We have already had exchanges with them on the boundary between north and west Northumberland and on Discretionary Council tax reductions for charities. The two Consortia are not in competition and we will work together. Again, we would like to thank the Chair and Secretary of the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium for assisting in setting up this Consortium.

Discretionary Non Domestic Council Tax Reductions for Charities

Halls and Community Buildings that are charities automatically get a reduction of 80% off non domestic Council Tax and some District Councils, such as Tynedale, have given the balance of 20% as a discretionary reduction. The responsibility for giving this relief from 1 April 2009 will be that of the Northumberland Unitary Authority. On members behalf, the Management Committee has lobbied the Leaders and Acting Chief Executive of the County Council to ensure that this discretionary element is continued. We have received no confirmation that this is to be the case. **It is essential that we keep this item in the eyes of the Councillors and officials and to this end all members are being asked to write to their local County Councillor drawing attention to this issue.**

Surface Water Charges

Many Halls have been faced with significant increases in water charges as a result of the splitting of costs between sewage and surface water charges. Alan Hedley of Community Action–Northumberland has recently issued a guide to these charges incorporating information on how to minimise them. Alan's article appeared in the August edition of Community Action News and can be downloaded from the Community Action-Northumberland web-site at www.ca-north.org.uk or contact Adrian Hinchcliffe

Hallmark Standard for Village Halls and Community Buildings

The Hallmark Scheme for Village Halls and Community Buildings is a national scheme and in Northumberland is being launched by Community Action-Northumberland. It is a quality standard scheme which will independently assess the effectiveness and management. Its purpose is to encourage improvement in establishing management customs and procedures, to obtain recognition from other bodies of a standard of management of community facilities and to encourage, establish and reward, good practice

The Consortium certainly supports the emergence the Hallmark Scheme and commends it to all members. Having the standard will certainly help in grant applications, in dealings with suppliers and it illustrates to the community that the Hall or Community Building is being managed in a proper manner.

The Scheme has three stages:-

Hallmark 1 – assesses whether the Hall is complying with the requirements of its charitable status.

Hallmark 2 – assesses compliance with legislative issue.

Hallmark 3 – examines the role of the hall in the community and how it interacts with its users and the wider community.

For an entry form please contact Louise Currie on 01670 500816 or by email -

louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk