

WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER Number 4 – SEPTEMBER 2009

ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS BROKER APPOINTED

Northern Utility Consulting Brokerage Ltd (NUCB) has been appointed as the energy and telecommunications broker for the Consortium and will commence work immediately. The Company, which is run by Kashaf Bashir is based in Brunton Park, Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne will obtain the best possible electricity, gas and telecommunications prices for members using the bulk purchasing power of the membership. Mike Wood, Chair of the Consortium said “this is a very important step forward for the Consortium which should benefit every single member and the management Committee are delighted to have this arrangement in place”. A confidential Guide to Members is being sent out which gives details of the arrangements. A commercial and confidentiality agreement has been signed with NUCB.

Annual General Meeting

The first Annual General Meeting of the Consortium will take place on Thursday 12 November 2009 and will be held at Newbrough Town Hall. All members will receive notification nearer the time.

The Management Committee is already planning the programme for the meeting but would welcome any suggestions from members. There will be the usual report for the period to 30 September 2009 and the election of officials and members of the Management Committee. Some Members of the Management Committee may be stepping down having seen the Consortium through the first 17 months, **so we are looking for new members to join. Please consider putting yourself forward for election.**

We are also anticipating a discussion on the programme for the Consortium over the next five years. It is essential that the Members contribute to this for the Consortium is in being to meet the needs of its members.

We are also looking at the possibility of a talk from the Energy and Telecommunications Broker and a talk by a Community Action-Northumberland official on the recent changes to the Licensing Act for Village Halls.

Please let Secretary Adrian Hinchcliffe have any suggestions for the programme.
adrian.hinchcliffe@btpopenworld.com

This Newsletter is published by the west
Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium.
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Water Charges

Northumbrian Water has introduced ‘surface water charges’ even though they are subject to a decision by OFWAT. This could result in a significant increase in charges for Village/Community Halls and other Community Buildings. If the rain water that drops on your building and site, subsequently runs into the public sewerage system your Hall will incur the surface water charge.

ACRE is leading a national campaign against these charges and attempting to make a special case for rural and urban community halls that receive a charge. Louise Currie of Community Action-Northumberland would like to know if your Hall receives a surface water charge. Please notify Louise on louiseCurrie@ca-north.org.uk

Discretionary Rates Relief

Northumberland County Council has been issuing invoices within the last two weeks. The invoice will show whether your Hall or Community Building has been successful in getting the whole or part of the discretionary portion which is 20 percent of the total charge.

It is known that there are some Halls that have not been awarded the full 20% relief and are therefore having to pay a proportion. These Halls can appeal against the decision. Make sure that you have interpreted the questions widely enough. Recompose your answers if necessary. Make sure that you have credit for being a member of the Consortium and Community Action-Northumberland (assuming that you do contribute to the latter). Most Halls in rural

communities that have a charitable constitution should be able to qualify for the 20% rates relief. It is known that some Halls have not been registered with their District Council for Business Tax. This has now come to light and these Halls are now having to go through a valuation process to establish a rateable value.

Membership of the Consortium

The membership now stands at 46. There are still around a further 20 Halls that have not yet joined. The Management Committee urge them to join to enjoy the benefits of membership and to be part of the network. The annual membership is £10 and that will be far exceeded by the discounts and other benefits that membership brings.

Annual Membership Fee due 1 October 2009.

For those members joining the Consortium before 31.01.09 the annual membership fee of £10 is due on 1 October 2009. You will receive a request from the Consortium.

Consortium web-site

The Consortium is developing a web site which will eventually be an important part of our 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

The Management Committee

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Assistance from Community Action – Northumberland

In many of the things that the Consortium does we are assisted by Louise Currie and Jane Hart of Community Action-Northumberland. This assistance is vital for they are able to tap into regional and national information banks to help in solving many issues. Many thanks to Louise and Jane.

Next Management Committee Meeting

Will take place on Tuesday 20 October 2009 commencing at 9.30am at the Stocksfield Institute and Community Association. Members are welcome to attend.

Further Benefits for Members

The Management Committee are pursuing further benefits for members. The ones that are currently receiving attention are:

- **Electrical Installation Testing**
- **Testing of Emergency Lighting Systems**
- **Testing of Fire Alarms**
- **Testing of Portable Appliances**

We are also looking at Energy Control Systems for Village/Community Halls.

Northumberland well in Advance

In addition to our own Consortium in the West of Northumberland, there is a sister organisation in north Northumberland called the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium. So Northumberland is well served. Teesdale also has a well established Consortium but in the rest of the country there are very few Consortia. So for a change the north is well ahead of other areas.

Emergency Lighting Requirements

The statutory specification for emergency lighting has been discussed at the last two Management Committee Meetings. Resulting from this Mike Wood has agreed to research the statutory and technical requirements. Once we are clear on this it will be published via the Newsletter and the web-site.

Members without Email Addresses

We have 8 of our 46 members who do not have an email address. The Secretary would be very grateful if those members could find a way of letting him have an email address for the dissemination of information including the Newsletter. It is an absolute pain having to make out envelopes, obtain copies of sheets and put them in envelopes. Please, please, please.

Requests from Members

If any member would like to publish an article on any issue that may be of interest to members generally, space can be made available in the Newsletter. Equally, if you wish to share some information or raise a question they can go in the Newsletter. Please send these to Secretary Adrian Hinchcliffe on email adrian.hinchcliffe@btopenworld.com