

WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

(A Self Help Group Run By Members For Members)
A registered Charity Number 1168006

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No.20 February 2017

Web Site - www.westnorthumberlandcbc.org.uk

Wanted – Photographs of your Hall or Community Building

Michael Elphick is trying to improve the Consortium web site by adding photographs of Members Halls or Community Buildings. Can you help please? Do you have any suitable photographs? If so will you please send them to Michael by email on michael@elphicks.plus.com

Is the Information on Your Hall up to Date

Can all Members please check to see if the information held on the Consortium Web Site about your Hall or Community Building is up to date. To check go to <http://www.westnorthumberlandcbc.org.uk/members/> and click on the name of your Hall. For updating follow the instructions or contact Michael Elphick on email michael@elphicks.plus.com.

We do know that these records are visited frequently by people who wish to hire a Hall, so it is wise to have your information up to date.

WiFi in Village Halls/Community Buildings

Thanks you to all the Members who responded to my email request on who has WiFi available. Those that have WiFi are as follows:

Corbridge Parish Hall
Bardon Mill and Henshaw VH
Gilsland VH
Newton and Bywell CH
RTC Otterburn
Merton Hall, Ponteland
Lane Head Tarsset VH
Wylam Institute
Newbrough Town Hall
Allendale VH
Ovingham Reading Room
Prudhoe Church Hall
Stocksfield Community Centre
Riding Mill Village Halls
The Hearth, Horsley
Shepherd's Dene
Humshaugh VH
Ponteland MH

Spetchells Centre, Prudhoe.

Greenhead VH

Hexham Community Centre

Some Members who do not have WiFi have indicated that they would like to have it available but the cost is prohibitive. Others have said that they hope to have it soon.

Newton and Bywell tell an amazing story. A few years ago there was no high speed broadband in Newton and very little prospect of it arriving for the small community. The Community got together and led by Anne Moyle entered into an agreement with a Newcastle based company to provide high speed broadband via a microwave link. It has been in the Community hall for at least four years and now 55 residents and 6 businesses are connected to the system. Well done Newton.

The Consortium will pressurise where we can for WiFi to be installed in village halls but with Members halls being spread over a big rural area it is a difficult issue.

Annual Subscription

Almost all members have paid their annual subscription with the exception of a few. For those who have not paid, David Easby the Membership Secretary, really needs your help. It is very frustrating to have to send emails and letters to chase a £10 subscription. It almost costs more than the subscription itself.

Formation of the Consortium

The Consortium was formed in 2008. It took about a year to set up the constitution and spread the word. Around twenty Halls in Tynedale got together with the help of Community Action Northumberland (CAN) and Tynedale District Council. It was recognised by all that by working together significant benefits could be generated for village halls and community buildings in the West of Northumberland.

The objectives of the Consortium were:

- To negotiate discounts and other benefits by utilising the collective buying power of members.
- To act as a voice for members in lobbying and other similar situations.
- To identify best practice for members.
- To pool knowledge and provide information for members.
- To provide training and other services (eg. PAT Testing) that are not feasible for individual members.
- To create a network of members.

The first success was to create a panel of insurers. That brought choice and competition. Most members achieved significant reductions in their insurance costs. Energy followed with the creation of the Northumberland Energy Club – now EnergyCAN. Again, members achieved significant reductions. Portable Appliance Testing was another facility that was introduced in conjunction with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium. Again, the result was significant reductions in the annual cost of appliance testing.

The web site was developed by Michael Elphick and has been the major tool for communicating with members. Along with bulk emailing the Consortium can contact every member within a few minutes.

Networking via the bulk emailing facility organised by the Secretary has been a main feature of the Consortium. Bringing together parties who wish to buy and sell or those who have information that needs to be disseminated.

The Consortium really is a self help group run by members for members.

Discretionary Rates Relief

All Members should have received a letter from the County Council asking you to return a form. On acceptance of the form the County Council has been extending discretionary rates relief until 31.03.18. THIS IS ULTRA IMPORTANT. If you do not return the

form you may well be liable to Business Rates Tax from 1st April 2017. Check this out with your Secretary or Treasurer. If in doubt contact Dale Kirk, Business Rates Team Leader – email dale.kirk@northumberland.gov.uk

Training for Members

After the full programme of training in 2016 it is not intended to offer training in 2017. However, bespoke training is always available from Community Action Northumberland (CAN). Get in contact with Andy Dean or Louise Currie to discuss and ask for a price.

Andy Dean - andydean@ca-north.org.uk

Louise Currie - louiseCurrie@ca-north.org.uk

EnergyCAN

Twenty eight members are benefitting from electricity and gas contracts under EnergyCAN. That means that 36 Members are NOT.

Come on – wake up and at least get a quote.

You can save money on your energy costs and switch to a better deal.

Get in touch today and you can:

- Get a 'no obligation' quote
- Save money on your energy bills
- Switch energy providers with our no hassle switching service

CALL 0800 019 9595 or 01727 877020. Be sure to QUOTE EnergyCAN for a free quote.

INSURANCE DISCOUNTS

Insurance is one of the highest costs that each Hall has to pay each year. The Consortium has a panel of four competent companies. All offer discounts to members of the Consortium. The companies are:

Allied Westminster

AON

Norris and Fisher

Insure Your Village Hall

We recommend that you select at least two companies and compare their quotations. Details of the companies and the procedure to follow are on the Consortium Web Site at <http://www.westnorthumberlandcbc.org.uk/members-information/insurance-discounts/>

Click on Guide to Members and follow the procedure. Be sure to start at least five weeks before your renewal is due.

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) Programme

The 2016/17 PAT Testing Programme is now well under way with 54 members requesting the service. Roly Taylor has taken over as Co-ordinator of the Scheme and is trying to get things running smoothly but he needs lots of help from everybody involved in what is a difficult task.

Following the recruitment drive in 2016 nine new volunteer testers have joined the scheme and are very welcome. They are:

Angela and David Watson of Wall
Chris Lindsay of Ovingham
Ray Hamilton of Consett
Ray Tilley of Allendale
Sally Denys and Paul Dennis of Birtley
Trish Hardy and John Seager of Ponteland.

All the above have to work through a study pack and undertake an examination. Having passed the exam they are then paired up with an experience PAT Tester to gain on the job experience.

We are also very thankful to the existing PAT Testers who are:

David Pentney of Rochester
Malcolm Brodie of Bellingham
David Wright of Slaley
Denis Peel of Wylam
Michael and Pat Stott of Ovingham
Mike Wood of Greenhead
Roly Taylor of Wall
Melvyn Whatmough of Gilsland

Through this scheme Members save a minimum of around £50 each year but this is only possible through the generosity of the volunteer testers and the willingness of Roly Taylor to make it work.

MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE INVOLVED.

Warm Hubs – An Opportunity for All Halls

Community Action Northumberland (CAN) is managing a relatively new initiative called Warm Hubs. It focuses on village halls/community buildings across the county, offering people living in rural areas a warm and friendly environment, with the bonus of a warm meal or healthy snack and signposting users to services that may help them - such as the NHS, AGE UK, the County Council and CAB.

If your hall currently organizes a soup and roll event, a lunch club, and/or Christmas meal, CAN is able to support the work you are already doing. Or, if you are interested in offering this service to local

residents in the future, CAN will be happy help you to get started.

Joining CAN's Warm Hub Scheme can offer the following benefits;

- small grants to help with small-scale energy efficiency measures
- governance support
- energy audit and accessibility audit on your building
- FREE training in Food Hygiene, dementia awareness and much more
- a register of service providers you can contact to discuss any issues affecting local residents
- support with funding applications
- general advice and support

If you are interested in your hall becoming part of the scheme and you would like to find out more about it, contact Christine Nicholls on 01289 304142 or by e-mail – christinenicholls@ca-north.org.uk

DO YOU USE HEATING OIL OR LPG?

If your Hall or Community Building uses oil or LPG why not join **OilCAN**.

OilCAN is CAN's bulk buying scheme for heating fuels including Kerosene (with or without additives), LPG, LPG bottles and Coal, the aims of the scheme are to:

- combine the purchasing power of residents, organisations and businesses in order to achieve the lowest possible prices for heating fuels.
- benefit residents, organisations and businesses, primarily in rural areas, who do not have access to mains gas.
- offer other products to members at discounted prices.

CAN has entered into an agreement with A F Affinity Ltd (Affinity) to deliver the scheme. Affinity is a subsidiary of Anglia Farmers which is an industrial and provident society and it is the largest agricultural co-operative buying group in the UK. Affinity's role is to negotiate with suppliers across the UK, to get lower prices and a better service.

There is an annual membership fee of £18 for a Community Buildings. If you would like to join or would like more information please call CAN on 01670 517178.

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