

WNCBC NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

MEMBERS' GATHERING - 20TH JUNE 2019

As you all know, the only meeting that WNCBC currently invites its members to attend is the AGM in November every year. We have therefore decided to invite you all to a 'Members Gathering', which will be an informal get-together, with no 'official' business, an interesting speaker, refreshments (yes, there will be homemade cake!) and the opportunity to meet other volunteers from our member halls.

**Thursday 20th June
7.00pm for 7.30pm start
Kirkwhelpington
Memorial Hall**

Julia Plinston (from CAN)

has agreed to be the speaker for this first 'Gathering'. She will talk about the proposed 'Village Halls Heritage Project' and we are delighted that Northumberland Archives is a partner in this initiative, and that one of their staff, Sarah Littlefear, will also be present. We think this will be a really interesting topic, because so many village halls/communities have an amazing history attached to them.

The link to a survey about the proposed Village Halls Heritage Project follows, and we would be grateful if you would take the time to complete it (if you haven't already done it). People

who attended CAN's celebration event in January (see page 3 for info) had the chance to complete the survey on the day, but we are very keen to hear from other halls:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/villagehallheritage1>

It would be very helpful to us if you could let us know (just click on the names below) if you are likely to attend, as Louise and Sarah need to know how much luscious cake to bake...!

VILLAGE HALL WEBSITE PORTAL UPDATE by Julia Plinston (CAN)

As you may remember, a few months ago we asked our members to complete a survey for to help us assess whether there is a demand for the Consortium and CAN to provide a Website Portal which would help each hall to create their own low-cost, easy to maintain website, with ongoing support from CAN staff to help get the best from the site.

To date, 23 halls (which is

just over 1/3 of our membership) have responded to the survey, of whom 19 indicated that they would be interested in using such a system. We believe that this is sufficient demand to make the project worthwhile, and the committee are keen to go ahead with a grant application to fund initial set-up of the project, which we hope will ensure that there are no set up costs charged to individual halls.

The survey also gives us information about what key features people want to see included in their site, and how much each hall is willing to spend on the ongoing running costs which will be invaluable in helping us develop a specification for the site with our web developer in the future.

We will keep you informed as the project develops.

ANNUAL RETURNS

If you are registered as a charity (as most of our members are), and you haven't already updated your details on the Charity Commission, it may be worth doing so sooner rather than later, as they have changed their website format and updated the legal requirements in terms of the information that charities need to provide.

As part of the changes, all charities are now required to check and update the details held by the Charity Commission before they can access the part of the website that allows them to submit their Annual Return online.

They give you a handy link to find out more about the changes and what information they now need. The link is below (you can click on it to get directly to the website):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-your-charity-details-improved-service-coming-soon>

Spotlight on...

KIRKWHELPINGTON MEMORIAL HALL

by Jill Bungay

In 1921, a Committee was set up to build a village hall in Kirkwhelpington and approached the Duke of Northumberland for a suitable piece of land. The original intention was to erect a wooden hut. Subsequently a site was identified (later gifted to the Trustees in 1925) and the Ladies Committee proposed that it should be a stone building and a Memorial Hall. Construction started in October 1923 at a tender price of £1,098.

Over the years, the Hall has had many uses, including as a temporary school for evacuees from 1939 to 1944. The hall was lit by oil lamps until 1952.

At a public meeting in 1997 it was suggested that a good way to celebrate the Millennium, which would benefit the whole village, would be to rebuild the Hall kitchen. A survey was carried out to see what improvements people would like to see, and consequently plans were drawn up. A successful application was made to 21st Century Halls to fund 50% of the cost. Building work began in June 1999 but was not completed until May 2000. The rebuild included not only a new, larger kitchen but also indoor toilets, a disabled toilet, storage rooms and an annexe to the mail hall. The



Hall was officially re-opened by the Duke of Northumberland in June 2000.

More recently, the old meeting room in the Hall has been converted to a full-time Post Office, also selling newspapers, milk and greetings cards. The Postmistress helpfully doubles as the Hall caretaker.

Following a recent user survey, plans are being drawn up to completely refurbish the toilets and the kitchen (and provide a much-requested dishwasher!)

Regular activities at the Hall include:

- *An art club*
- *British Legion Women's Section*
- *Regular traditional music evenings*
- *A carpet bowls club*
- *A weekly youth club*
- *A Portuguese takeaway every Saturday*
- *Last Saturday coffee mornings*
- *Parish Council meetings*
- *A Christmas coffee morning and Strawberry Cream teas in Summer*
- *Performances by Northumberland Theatre Company*



Kirkwhelpington also has the rare distinction of being a country village without a pub, so the Memorial Hall is truly the centre of activity in the village!

COLD CALLS

Some members of WNCBC have reported that they have recently received cold calls from a group saying they are doing research and helping charities to get the best deal on energy. Adrian Hinchcliffe has this to say:

"They told me that Longhoughton Community Centre (of which I am Secretary) was being charged on the higher rate of VAT and they could save it for me. They asked me to send invoices – which I did not do.

After two or three calls over several months I eventually told them that they were wrong (which they were) and we are paying VAT at the 5% rate. I also told them that our contract was negotiated by LSI and that we were satisfied that we are getting the best rates. They have now stopped calling.

There is evidence that many organisations and individuals are getting this sort of cold call, and it is all about trying to get a foot in the door.

The LSI contract is between CAN and LSI, but the main users are members of the West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium and the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium.

Two years ago, Utilitywise came around calling trying to get CAN to switch to them rather than LSI. Andy and I visited their offices but decided against switching. How right we were – they have gone bust."

#VILLAGE HALLS WEEK

CAN held its **#VillageHallsWeek** event on 23rd January 2019 in Stannington Village Hall (next to the Ridley Arms) to acknowledge all the hardworking, dedicated trustees who manage halls and community buildings across Northumberland. The event was a huge success, with over 100 people attending, who packed the room to share their experiences and projects, past and present - all of which ably demonstrated the fundamental role played by village halls and community buildings across Northumberland.

The assembled throngs were treated to entertainment provided by broadcaster, poet and village hall champion, Ian McMillan, who had the entire audience laughing from start to finish – and helped create our own Northumberland poem for village halls.

CAN also launched an exciting new project focusing on the rich heritage of our village halls and as part of the event, showcased the heritage of village halls and the huge contribution they make to rural communities.



A major funding boost for village halls was also announced as the National Lottery Community Fund, previously known as the Big Lottery Fund, awarded over £420,000 to the Northumberland Village Halls project, led by CAN. This is one of the first projects to be awarded money raised by National Lottery players, under the new name of the largest funder of community activity in the UK.



This fantastic news was announced at the CAN Village Halls event in January and means that 11 village halls will all receive the funding they need to carry out important improvement and refurbishment works.

Trustee Indemnity for Community Halls

by Gavin Mitchell - MD of Allied Westminster

What Is It?

Trustee Indemnity cover provides financial protection in the event of claims by third-parties for loss which occurs due to a 'wrongful act' by a Trustee or Officer of a Community Hall. The Charities Act 2006 introduced the right of Trustees to buy this insurance out of charity assets providing that the governing document does not expressly prohibit the purchase.

A charity's Trustees and Officers have responsibilities which can expose those individuals to personal liability for any errors made in the performance of their duties, even as the result of innocent mistakes and errors of judgment. In consequence, they can personally face claims which could lead to fines and compensation awards.

Trustee Indemnity protects the Trustees and Management Committee both as individuals and as a group. This a key consideration because the role of Trustee involves joint liability. If a Management Committee is successfully sued for wrongdoing, then all Trustees would be financially liable.

So, Trustee Indemnity covers the payment of damages and most costs and expenses flowing from an actual or alleged 'wrongful act'. Typically, this covers key areas like breach of duty, breach of trust, neglect, error, omission, misstatement, libel, slander and any other act committed by a Trustee solely in the course of the activities of the charity. But it will not provide cover in respect of intentional

wrongdoing or the making of improper profits. Indeed, the range of cover can be quite narrow and specific, so it is essential to check what your policy provides.

What Is It For?

Trustee Indemnity provides legal costs and expenses incurred in defending such claims as:

Unfair dismissal on the grounds of sex or race; Breach of Trust where the rules of the governing document are broken, or the charity's funds misused or the charity's status is misused, even inadvertently; Defamation, where an individual or organisations may claim that statements made in print are untrue and give false representation; Legal fees to defend a Charity Commission Investigation after it is alleged that the Trustees have mis-handled the charity's assets; or financial claims, such as when a Village Hall plans a building project and the builder sets to work only to find that the Charity does not have the funds to pay. The builder may then seek recompense from the Trustees.

Do We Need It?

This is something each Committee must decide for itself. The cost is quite modest, but Halls will have to take a view based on their own specific circumstances and the exposure to risk they believe they face. Their risk assessment can be based on giving themselves honest answers to tough questions: Is the Hall well run? Are there processes in place for the accurate processing of financial transfers and

accounts? Is management genuinely done by the whole Committee or by one or two individuals who don't account for their actions? Are building or expansion projects planned and are funds in place to pay for them? Do opportunities exist to confuse revenue streams? Does the Hall have employees and is everyone up to date with Employment Legislation? Have all sub-letting arrangements in place been made within the terms of the governing document. And so on.

A key reason that Halls opt for Trustee Indemnity is peace of mind – not just for existing Trustees but for those new Trustees the Committee is hoping to recruit. In recent times the fear of becoming personally liable for decisions taken as a volunteer Trustee has had a significant impact on recruitment. Halls may consider the inexpensive cost of Trustee Indemnity to be worthwhile to meet that challenge alone.

As a final point, it is worth re-emphasising that Criminal Acts and a failure to insure charity assets correctly are never covered by Trustee Indemnity. Some Trustees believe that a failure to set their building Sums Insured correctly will be covered by Trustee Indemnity if they become liable for a shortfall at time of claim. They are wrong...

Allied Westminster
Tel: 01937 845245, or visit
www.villageguard.com



Allied Westminster is Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) registration number

MEMBERSHIP OF WNCBC

Your Benefits

The Consortium was created by members for the benefit of members. Here are the benefits of membership:

- Access to discounts on insurance.
- The PAT Testing Service that offers a testing service that is around one third of commercial rates.
- Access to EnergyCAN with low value electricity and gas contracts and benefits from collective purchasing.
- Access to an Information Service that offers information on a full range of topics relating to running a Community Building, including funding.
- Guidance on constitutional issues and charity matters.
- Information on licensing and the regulations that relate to community buildings.
- Newsletters and Bulletins updating members on current news and issues.
- A louder voice on issues by enabling the Consortium to speak on behalf of all its members.
- Access to training courses and discounts offered by CAN to members.
- Access to a network of members for sales, purchases and information.
- Membership of a network of similar type organisations in West Northumberland.
- Access to other discounts organised by the Consortium.
- Guidance on best practice.

DIRECT FROM OUR MEMBERS...

TV LICENSING

Ponteland Memorial Hall has had a communication from TV licensing indicating that they will be visiting the Hall to determine whether we need a license.

Currently neither we nor any of our hirers use live or recorded TV displays.

However many of our visitors have mobiles which they access for news etc including the possibility that they will be viewing BBC freeview on a live basis. These are not connected to mains and should be covered by their home license.

Apart from issuing a notice that devices using mains connections to watch TV are not permitted we do not propose to purchase a license.

Specific Questions I would like your help with:

1. If your Hall has a TV license, what activities do you have that require a license?
2. If your does not have a TV license do you have any published restrictions?
3. Have any Hall had a visit from the licensing authority?

Please communicate with Robin Ramsay, chairman, at ramsayrobert976@gmail.com

CLEANING COSTS

Bardon Mill and Henshaw Village Hall needs your help with comparing cleaning costs...

The hall is used at least twice a day and they have a lot of classes which use the floor (such as yoga, pilates, baby classes etc.) so they have the hall cleaned twice a week (3 hours on a Monday and 2 hours on a Thursday), for which their cleaner charges £12.50 an hour.

Are there any halls out there which have a similar usage at their own hall and, if so, would you be prepared to share what you spend on cleaning with Julie (even to know what percentage of your budget you put aside for cleaning would help).

If you think you can help, please email: julieandmichael@hotmail.co.uk

'I might have been 'done' again!'

I have just had our yearly invoice from a well known Fire Extinguisher firm. The invoice listed all the bits and pieces replaced itemised on it including "CC" or Credit Charge which I spotted as it was zero VAT rated. This is a charge for £5 which one deducts from the payment if paid promptly. Which I did. I then went back through the last six years of invoices from this firm and found I had paid the extra £5 for every year except 2013 when I must have spotted it. Although there is a note on the invoice in bold below I had only seen it in 2013 and our examiners of accounts had also missed it. We will be refunded the £25. While this would not break the bank I feel chuffed to have spotted it, and it was an hour well spent to "earn" the £25.

I am writing to you to bring to every ones attention to this little item slipped on the bottom of an invoice. I will be looking out for others in the future.

From Denis Peel

DIRECT FROM OUR MEMBERS...

Disposal of sanitary waste

I recently took over as Treasurer of my local Community Hall and found I was receiving notices of Direct Debit payments for 'Supply of Hygiene Services' which meant emptying waste bins in the ladies' toilets at a cost of around £250pa. Our Caretaker queried this and said he was willing to do it as part of his job. I contacted the company concerned and said I wanted to cancel the Direct Debit because we no longer required the service. I was told we aren't allowed to do this disposal ourselves and I was referred to a five year contract with a clause saying:

11.2 If you are not entitled to terminate under Clause 10.1 but seek to terminate otherwise than in accordance with Clause 10.2 or in the event we should terminate the Agreement under Clause 9 after the expiry of the minimum 18 month period, then you shall also

pay to us by way of liquidated damages the following sums:

11.2.1 where the equipment has been manufactured or customised to your own specifications or requirements, a sum equal to 100% of the aggregate Rentals which would, but for termination, have been payable from the date of termination up until the expiry of the Minimum Period or the current Extension Period or

11.2.2 in all other cases, a sum equal to 75% of the aggregate Rentals which, but for termination, would have been payable from the date of termination up until the expiry of the Minimum Period or the then current Extension Period.

The contract is very detailed and the covering Hire Agreement is in extremely small print and almost illegible. The various Clauses refer to the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

After some research, I found this on the government website at <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-classify-different-types-of-waste/healthcare-and-related-wastes> (see table below).

You must segregate healthcare offensive waste from both clinical and mixed municipal wastes.

If you've produced more than 7kg of municipal offensive waste, or have more than one bag in a collection period, you must segregate it from any mixed municipal waste.

If you've produced less, you can dispose of your municipal offensive waste in your mixed municipal waste ('black bag'). Use classification code 20-03-01.

I also found this on a legal website '**If a liquidated damages payment constitutes a penalty it will be unenforceable.**' Wikipedia says something similar at greater length.

I emphasise that I have no legal expertise but, if hall committees are using or planning to use contractors for this kind of service, I suggest they read the small print carefully and consider whether they might wish to do it themselves...

Waste type	Waste status	Human healthcare	Animal healthcare
Healthcare offensive waste, eg outer dressings and protective clothing like masks, gowns and gloves that aren't contaminated with body fluids, and sterilised laboratory waste	Non-hazardous	18-01-04	18-02-03
Municipal offensive waste, eg hygiene waste and sanitary protection like nappies and incontinence pads	Non-hazardous	20-1-99	20-01-99

TREASURER TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

by Louise Currie

NEXT ISSUE

Does your committee need some help with managing the finances?

The Consortium has very recently, had enquiries from two halls struggling trying to attract someone to manage their finances, and we know this can be a daunting role for many people. Let's remember that managing the finances is the duty of **all** the trustees – not just the treasurer – so the Consortium has decided to offer what we feel could be a solution to the problem. The Consortium is willing to arrange a couple of sessions which will undoubtedly boost the confidence of your committee! Louise has organised these sessions many, many, times and everyone who has taken part, say how much easier it has made their life!!

Easy Accounts for Community Groups

Easy Accounts is a user-friendly computer programme for treasurers who have no formal training in book-keeping. You can master it in less than an hour – all you have to do is enter every income and expenditure item and the programme does the rest! It creates a searchable record of transactions, a periodic summary for committee and the all-important annual accounts for the AGM (and the Charity Commission!). It also has bank reconciliation, budget monitoring and clever tools to analyse income and expenditure. Once you've got it you will wonder how on earth you managed without it!

(The programme is free and works on any Windows operating system. If you use a Mac OS you will have to buy the programme, although there is a 30-day free trial for this)

Attend the Easy Accounts training event and you will get a User Guide and sample Village Hall accounts to practise your skills before 'going live' with your own data input. **The training pack costs £10 per hall – payable on the day** (but the training itself is paid for by WNCBC).

Looking after the Money

Village hall financial matters are governed by your Trust Deed and Charity Law. **All trustees**, not just the Treasurer, are responsible for the content and accuracy of the village hall accounts. So, what do you need to know?

The Looking after the Money session spells it out: what you should do, what you can do, what you must never do, and how to meet your obligations in a few simple steps. You will be given a policy framework for looking after the money, a template for 'doing it right' and some tools for 'doing the job well'. Essential information for both new and experienced trustees.

This session will be free of charge to each hall (the Consortium will cover the costs of the session)

Interested?

We need to gauge interest in these sessions – and need a minimum of 8 halls to attend, to run each session. We are happy for a couple of people to come from each hall.

If you and/or any of your committee is interested in attending, please send an e-mail to **both** Sarah Hallberg sarahwncbc@btinternet.com and Louise Currie louise.wncbc@ca-north.org.uk to let us know how many people from your committee want to come along.

Once we have sufficient names, we will arrange the sessions – we estimate that they will take place later in the summer/early autumn.

We know our members have some amazing halls and buildings and we think it would be nice to show them off a little - not least because we all do some very different things!

If you would like your hall or building to be featured in our '**Spotlight on...**' section, please do let us know. Photographs of your halls and/or committees would also be welcome.

Of course, if you're all too shy to contact us, we may contact you directly to see if you would like to be featured.

FEEDBACK

We would very much welcome your feedback on this newsletter and on the information it contains.

Please feel free to contact us via email (you can click on the links below):

[Sarah](#) or [Louise](#)

Louise and Sarah will be happy to answer any queries you might have.

We would also be interested to know if there are any topics you would like to see covered in the next newsletter (which will be in Autumn/Winter 2019).

UPDATE ON THE RURAL CRIME INITIATIVE

by David Easby

It has been a few weeks since the initial information sessions were carried out by officers from Northumbria Police, which were very enlightening and informative. Since the sessions, the following progress has been made:

- a guidance toolkit has been created which will be published in the next couple of weeks. Within the toolkit has been included a terms of reference for the Village Hall Project Volunteers, which will provide a basic outline of what a volunteer aims to achieve together with Northumbria Police.
- A dedicated Village Hall Project Local point of contact has been allocated, and the officer is Community Support Officer 5313 Colin Scott, based at Hexham Police station. Colin will be introducing himself during the coming weeks to all Village Hall Project Volunteers.
- In addition, a trial community messaging link is being established through Farm Watch, which will deliver all necessary updates and information.

Whilst on this subject, the following communication was received earlier this month from Northumbria Police and the circulation of this fraud information in the Village of Wall proved very beneficial:

“Could you please forward this information on as a matter of urgency to the relevant partner agencies, carers, families and any elderly contacts. (the below details may vary slightly but the basic fraud is the same).

We have had a spate of telephone frauds from offenders claiming to be from the Metropolitan Police. They are telephoning elderly people and informing them that there is a covert, high profile on going fraud investigation involving employees of their bank. The offenders convince the victim that they need to move their money into a safe bank account, without informing their own bank, otherwise it could be stolen! The fraudsters are quite convincing and pass a telephone number for a department within the Metropolitan Police, they then request the victim to phone this number.

However, the fraudsters do not hang-up their end of the telephone therefore the victim passes their bank details to another member of the criminal gang! Obviously, this can result in the victim's bank account being wiped clean.”

The Police will **never, ever** request bank account details or highly sensitive personal information over the phone. Police strongly recommend that no one should ever pass on confidential information on to cold callers.