



VILLAGE-VOICE

Welcome to the tenth edition of VILLAGE-VOICE
an email bulletin specifically for management committee members and user groups
of village halls and community buildings across County Durham

Hallmark successes in Teesdale!

We would like to congratulate Winston Village Hall and Cotherstone Village Hall management committees who have both recently received the Hallmark Level 1 accreditation. The Hallmark scheme was launched in 2007 by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and is operated across the whole of County Durham by DRCC. The aim of the scheme is to recognise the good work undertaken by volunteer village hall management committees and to provide support on any areas that may require support or additional help.

The best way to think of Hallmark is as an 'MOT' for halls – using a checklist of standards it will assess how well your hall is being operated and where there are areas that need developing or updating; DRCC can then provide one to one support to work on these.

Winston and Cotherstone Village Halls committees have both achieved Level 1 of Hallmark which focuses on their management and administration and both would now like to progress to Hallmark Level 2 which looks at health, safety, security and licences.

Annie Dolphin, secretary of Winston Village Hall described how she found the process:

“Overall I think that looking at the Hallmark requirements helped us to understand what we were responsible for and what we should be doing as committee members and trustees. We didn't know what we didn't know if you like. The first eye opener was our individual responsibilities as trustees and the need to get our constitution up to date and on the right footing. It's complicated, complying with registered charity requirements, but absolutely essential because it confers benefits e.g. no tax on profits, and access to external funding sources. Once we all understood our trustee responsibilities the Hallmark checklist is a great tool that we're using as a management committee to make sure that we understand what's involved and cover everything. It gives committee members assurance that they **are** doing their best to comply with their trustee responsibilities and they feel more comfortable because of that. Without Hallmark we would have had to do a great deal of research to pull it all together and there are so many Spanish practices and myths around that even then we wouldn't have been sure that we were on the right track. Hallmark saved all that so thank you to DRCC for introducing us to it and for your support. ”

The assessors were very impressed with the way in which both halls are run and the committees were commended on their dedication towards achieving the standard.

We are carrying out a further two Hallmark assessments in February in different areas of the county and would like to encourage any other halls who are interested in finding out more about Hallmark to contact Helen Brown on 01207 529621 or email helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk

We are also looking to run some training on Hallmark Level 1 so if you would like to register your interest in this please contact Helen on the details above.

HALLMARK



a quality
standard scheme
for village halls

Hallmark 1 achieved



JOB VACANCIES

East Durham LEADER - Administrator

£18,000 pa pro rata (14 hours weekly), fixed term to December 2013

We require an experienced person with excellent organisational skills to provide administrative support for the East Durham LEADER Manager and the Local Action Group. This post is funded by:



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



Oil Buying Scheme Administrator

£18,000 pa pro rata (14 hours weekly), 12 months fixed term contract

We require an experienced person with excellent organisational skills to administer our Bulk Oil Buying Scheme, and recruit local co-ordinators.

How to apply

Visit www.durhamrcc.org.uk/jobs/ or telephone for 01207 529621 for more details. Applications must be received by 5pm on 16 February. Interviews will be held on 28 & 29 February. If you have not heard from us by 27 February, please assume you have not been shortlisted.

Register your Interest: Training Opportunities

The BOSS (Back Office Services Support) is a partnership of Durham Rural Community Council, Community Action Northumberland and Tees Valley Rural Community Council. The BOSS Project will run training workshops across the region as part of a series of Pilot Projects designed to promote good practice in the management of voluntary community organisations.

After the success of our financial workshops in 2011, we are looking to run these again in the spring and would like to invite expressions of interest for the following half day workshops:

Looking after the Money - a session to develop financial policies and procedures for community groups with the aim of reducing financial risk, giving confidence in handling money and producing transparency in annual accounts

One Click Accounts - this session is aimed at treasurers and reluctant treasurers. It offers Book keeping made simple through the use of a straightforward computer software programme which produces monthly and annual reports at the click of a mouse.

To register your interest in either of these training opportunities please contact Helen Brown on 01207 529621 or email helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk

Feed-in Tariffs Update

The Department of Energy and Climate Change is laying before Parliament draft licence and modifications which, subject to the Parliamentary process set out in the Energy Act 2008, makes provisions for a reduced tariff rate (from 1 April 2012 onwards) for new solar PV installations with an eligibility date on or after 3 March 2012 under the Feed-in Tariffs scheme (FITs). The recent successful legal challenge by Friends of the Earth and the solar industry found the Government had acted unlawfully. The Government is currently appealing this decision in the High Court and if successful will retain the proposals made in the consultation including the 12 December 2011 eligibility date.

For more information please visit www.decc.gov.uk

Update on The Localism Act

As you may have seen in the press, the Localism Act has now received royal assent, having completed its passage through Parliament. The new legislation gives additional rights and powers to communities and individuals, including:

- making it easier for people to take over local assets like shops and pubs (through the community right to bid)
- giving local groups the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service (the community right to challenge)
- enabling local residents to call local authorities to account for the management of taxpayers' money

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have produced a Plain English guide to the Act which you can download for free at

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishupdate

This guide describes the main measures of the Localism Act under four headings:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

It is designed to give an overview only; you can read the Act and its explanatory notes in full, on the Parliament website at:

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism/documents.html>

Dates for your Diaries...

DRCC will also be running two half day information sessions on the Localism Act in March:

- Wednesday 28th March @ Bowburn Community Centre
- Thursday 29th March @ Marwood Social Centre

There will be a number of guest speakers on a varied programme which will include representatives from Durham County Council Planning Department. You will also hear first-hand accounts from community groups who are already working towards producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Both events will commence at 10.00am and will include lunch. To reserve a place contact Lesley Millgate on 01207 529621 or email lesley.millgate@durhamrcc.org.uk

Deaf Awareness Event

A new initiative to encourage more voluntary organisations to take up Deaf Awareness is now available in Durham. Signs4Life have set up an introductory workshop in Deaf Awareness to help staff to communicate and engage with their deaf & hard of hearing colleagues, service users, students and clients in Durham. The Deaf Awareness event will be taking place on Tuesday 21st February 2012 at Durham Community Association, Shakespeare Hall, North Road, Durham. (DH1 4SQ) from 9:30am-12:30pm

This local initiative is to help identify barriers that deaf people face and explore their culture and community but also to encourage inclusion of all people with sensory, physical or learning disabilities in Durham. [Attendance is strictly by booking only \(limited places\).](#)

For further information please contact Fozia on info@signs4life.org.uk

LitterFreeDurham

Thanks to all groups across the region for contribution to the success of last year's Big Spring Clean. A brilliant total of 1066 people took part in removing 1472 big black bags of litter plus tonnes of other rubbish from their highways and walkways – a tremendous result. Because of its success and the need to continue to clean up our communities, LitterFreeDurham are organising another Big Spring Clean starting Monday April 16th to Friday May 11th 2012. We hope you will continue to support us; for further information please contact gerald.lee@darlington.gov.uk or telephone 01325 314622

Join in Durham's Olympic legacy – information from Durham County Council

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to inspire people to take part in sport, physical or cultural activity and leave a lasting legacy of increased involvement across the country. We hope to do just that in County Durham through the 'join in...' campaign.

What is it?

In the coming months, we will be bringing the Olympic spirit to our residents through the join in programme, a series of activities and events in the:

- 20 weeks leading up to Durham hosting the Torch Relay on the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, the 16 and 17 June
- 12 weeks beyond this to the closing ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

The London 2012 Inspire-marked programme will see activities take place in schools, sports clubs, cultural and sporting facilities and in some of the county's finest outdoor settings. The campaign involves many of our partners and will have the assistance of dedicated volunteers. The idea is to encourage as many people as possible to, quite simply, join in!

Through the programme we will also be:

- encouraging and celebrating excellence in the county
- celebrating Olympic values through international links and shared learning.

Sign up for the join in... newsletter

Register for the join in newsletter at

<http://durham.us4.list-manage2.com/subscribe?u=9ccae12f11ddc27411429cc7e&id=429f377cd9>

and you'll get news and information straight to your inbox about join in activities and events and the Olympic Torch Relay visit to Durham.

What's coming up?

Find out what join in 2012 events and activities are happening now and in the coming weeks, as well as programmes running throughout the period by visiting:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=8673>

Olympic Torch news

Find out where the Olympic Torch Relay will visit and details of the evening celebration in Durham City by visiting <http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=8674>

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is consulting on future plans – We want everyone to have the opportunity to have their say

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service has launched its public consultation on the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Integrated Risk Management Planning is about allocating resources in the most effective way to improve public safety, reduce the number of fire incidents and save lives.

The full Integrated Risk Management Plan is available on our website www.ddfire.gov.uk
<<http://www.ddfire.gov.uk>>

However, we have summarised our consultation proposals in an online questionnaire and this can be accessed in the following link Fire Service Survey <<https://www.smart-survey.co.uk/v.asp?i=44199hcnlr>>

Your Views and Comments

We would welcome your views and comments on this e-bulletin; please also let us know if there are any topics you would like covering in future issues. Please feel free to circulate this e-bulletin amongst your committee members and if anyone would like to receive it directly in the future please ask them to contact:

VILLAGE-VOICE Contact

Helen Brown (nee Thistlethwaite), Development Officer – Community Buildings
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