



# VILLAGE-VOICE

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

## Durham County Council Review of Community Buildings Update

This review was presented at Durham County Council's cabinet meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September and a period of consultation will take place between now and December.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://democracy.durham.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=4522>

Details of the consultation can be found at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=8532>

**There is a link to an online questionnaire on this page which we would strongly encourage you to complete to give your views.**

Although this report considers proposals for the individual buildings that Durham County Council owns, it also outlines a proposed future approach to their Community Building Grant Aid scheme which also affects non Council owned buildings.

### **The Council's Community Building Grant Aid Scheme Proposed Approach (taken from the review document)**

The Council currently supports 129 community buildings through a grant aid scheme. As part of this review, there is an opportunity to develop a new system that is in line with the overall proposed approach of trying to ensure where support is given in the future, it is transparent and supports the long term sustainability of community buildings. It is therefore proposed that as part of the consultation on this report, in addition to the potential options of withdrawing or reducing support, views should be sought on whether access to this fund should be based on proposals that meet the following criteria:

- (i) Support for the installation of more sustainable or efficient energy management/generation equipment;
- (ii) Support for the development of management groups that will enable them to create more income generation activities;
- (iii) Support for the strategic development of community buildings through funding the development of business plans etc., which are an important aspect in creating a sustainable organisation;
- (iv) A combination of all the above, including views on the need for matching funding

It is proposed that the status quo should not be an option in the present economic circumstances. It is therefore recommended that as part of the consultation carried out on this review, views are sought on a change of criteria for this fund. It is suggested that the fund would be accessed by a bidding process whereby applicants would need to demonstrate how their bid would support the long term viability of their building in line with the principles set out above. It is further proposed that the consultation seek views on the fund being administered by the 14 AAPs, each of which would be given a pro-rata allocation to manage and allocate.

**As highlighted above we would strongly encourage you to take part in the online consultation on this; consultation events are also expected to take place around the county and we will keep you updated on these.**

**DRCC would also welcome your views to feed into our response to the review;  
please email [helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk](mailto:helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk) or telephone 01207 529621**

## Concessions to Surface Water Drainage Charges for Community Groups

The Government has passed legislation enabling water and sewerage companies to operate concessionary schemes for community groups. Final guidance on the operation of concessionary schemes was published by Defra in December 2010. This guidance requires that water companies consult with customers and their representatives as to the need, design and cost of a concessionary scheme.

Defra recognised the little time available to consult with customers prior to the approval of charges commencing 1 April 2011 and encouraged companies to consider interim measures ahead of the 2012/13 charging year. As such Northumbrian Water has decided to introduce an **interim concessionary charge** for the charging year 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. Surface water drainage charges for community groups will be capped at Band 1 (£109.30) for eligible properties.

An eligible property must be primarily used as a:

- Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) registered with HM Revenue & Customs;
- village or community hall, or community association receiving discretionary relief from their local council for business rates;
- meeting place for Scout and Guide Association groups or similar youth organisations;
- place of public religious worship.

and:

- be run as a not-for-profit organisation;
- be non-governmental and non-political;
- be open to the whole community without discrimination;
- reinvest any and all profits in the organisation;
- not receive all its funding from local government;
- have a metered water supply;
- be connected for surface water drainage.

For more information and to complete the application form to receive the concession please visit [www.nwl.co.uk/bSurfacewatercharges.aspx](http://www.nwl.co.uk/bSurfacewatercharges.aspx)

## Rural hall committees welcome proposals to scrap the licensing of entertainment

The announcement by the Department for Culture Media and Sport of their intention to deregulate entertainment licensing in the UK is welcomed by ACRE and the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN).

Village halls and similar rural community buildings provide a venue for the delivery of a wide range of local arts and cultural activities in rural communities. 75% of rural halls currently have to hold a Premises Licence which permits a variety of entertainment to be held in public such as the performance of live music, dance and the playing of recorded music. There is no charge for the licence to halls but it requires a significant amount of administration.

Removing the need for the licence will release a burden from volunteers as well as from the local authorities administering applications. Where hall committees have to apply for Temporary Events Notices for entertainment there will be financial savings which will be very much appreciated by those raising funds for the running costs of the hall.

ACRE and RCAN will be encouraging rural communities across England to contribute positively to the consultation and we will keep you updated on this.

(Information taken from ACRE News Release 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011)

**Please note this proposed deregulation applies to the Premises Licences issued by Durham County Council and NOT the PRS/PPL licences which are completely separate to this**

## Help and advice for affordable warmth

With winter fast approaching and fuel prices rising, now is the time to review your energy use, both in the home, and community building. Working alongside partners including National Energy Action (NEA), DRCC is running an **energy advice programme for communities who do not have access to mains gas**.



Called 'FREE' (the Future of Rural Energy in England), the programme aims to offer independent advice and information about energy efficiency and cost saving measures (including availability of grants).

Together with NEA, we are currently undertaking a village energy audit in **St John's Chapel**. All households have received a survey to complete and on **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October** we will be in the village offering advice and information at the **Town Hall between 12-2pm**. Anyone living in the village who has not completed and returned a form can do so on the day, or download a copy from our website: [www.durhamrcc.org.uk/villageenergyaudit](http://www.durhamrcc.org.uk/villageenergyaudit) after 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

We are considering **establishing a countywide bulk oil buying scheme** based on a model that has already been successfully trialled by another RCC. Membership will be available to domestic households, community groups (e.g. village halls), and small businesses.

We are also able to attend some events or give talks to rural groups in some areas about saving energy and reducing fuel costs.

If you would like more information on any part of this programme please contact Liz Charles: [liz.charles@durhamrcc.org.uk](mailto:liz.charles@durhamrcc.org.uk) or telephone 01207 529621.

## Charities and VAT on building works

Following a query from a village hall regarding VAT on repair and maintenance works to their building, we feel it may be useful to include some information on the topic for you as it is a fairly complex issue.

Charities do have to pay VAT and other taxes - there are some myths about that they don't!

Exceptions and variations to halls paying VAT on building works are:

- Extensions and refurbishments are standard rated; it is new build halls that are zero rated
- It is possible to exempt from VAT works that are purely for use by disabled persons
- Energy saving materials such as insulation can be rated at 5%
- If a Parish Council (PC) pays for the works with its **own** funds and then donates the work to the hall then the PC could get the VAT back. It would be important to make sure that none of the funding had come from the village hall committee account or donated to the hall committee and given to the PC to pay for the work.

If you would like more detailed information on VAT, we are able to provide you with an ACRE Village Hall Information Sheet 'Village Halls and VAT on building work and other purchases' FREE of charge.

To request a copy of this please email [helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk](mailto:helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk)

## Dates for your Diaries...

### What will the Localism Bill Mean for you and your Community?

You can find out more by coming along to one of our information sessions. We will have 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.

If you are thinking of carrying out a community plan for your neighbourhood or would just like to know more about the implications of the Bill why not join us at:

- Bowburn Community Centre Bowburn on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December
- Agnew Community Centre Newton Aycliffe on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December

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](mailto:lesley.millgate@durhamrcc.org.uk)

## Funding Updates



### Further funding available from East Durham Leader

East Durham LEADER is an exciting initiative that has brought significant benefits to the communities in east Durham. The programme aims to deliver sustainable rural development that addresses social and economic inequalities for communities within the east Durham area and provides the opportunity for project ideas to be developed by local representatives.

One of the projects supported was Cornforth Pathways to achievement, offering tailor made training packages to suit the needs of the individual. The project aimed to raise aspirations, improve access to learning and employment opportunities, and stimulate enterprise. In its first year, the project has delivered training to 221 course participants and supported 93 individuals. The project received £34,721 of LEADER funding.

Further funding has now been announced and is available from January 2012. The Local Action Group is looking to support interesting and innovative ideas that can make a real difference in East Durham. The East Durham LEADER programme is jointly funded by Defra and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

For more information, please contact Louise Johnson on 01429 824743, email [louise@eastdurhamleader.org.uk](mailto:louise@eastdurhamleader.org.uk) or via the website on [www.durhamrcc.org.uk/eastdurhamleader](http://www.durhamrcc.org.uk/eastdurhamleader)



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



### Don't miss out on the Village SOS Competition – Closing date extended to 20 October

Over the last few weeks Village SOS – a prime time BBC TV series has been following the journey of six UK villages as they each use a Big Lottery Fund grant to start up a community enterprise that they hope will breathe new life into their local area.

**Don't forget that the Village SOS Competition is still open!** With 250 awards of between £10,000 and £30,000 available, they really want communities across the North East to participate in this fantastic opportunity to regenerate their villages. We're looking to support inspiring business ideas that will bring people together to tackle the challenges they face.

Your idea must be for a community enterprise, your village must be in a rural area and have fewer than 3,000 people living in it and they can only accept one entry per village.

You need to be signed up on the Village SOS website to enter the competition so visit [www.villagesos.org.uk/competition](http://www.villagesos.org.uk/competition) to sign up and learn more or call the advice line on 0845 434 9123. Entry forms need to be submitted by 5pm on **Thursday 20 October 2011** so don't delay!

### County Durham Community Foundation Grants Available

They currently have grants of around £2,500 for Community and Voluntary Groups. If your group is based in County Durham or Darlington you may be eligible. They can support projects around:

- Self-help groups
- Environmental improvements
- Education
- Vulnerable people
- Community regeneration
- Health and wellbeing
- Capacity and skills development
- Children and young people



If you are interested in applying for a grant please complete Part A of our application form available at [www.cdcf.org.uk](http://www.cdcf.org.uk)

## Hallmark Hubs – Exploring a New Approach to Hallmark Awards for Rural Community Buildings

### Event Invitation

A number of halls across the County have expressed an interest in the Hallmark Quality Standards Scheme for Village Halls and several are working towards Hallmark Level 1

An event is taking place to look at the potential of creating Hallmark Hubs - informal networks of several halls that are geographically close together that work together to achieve the Hallmark standard and assess each other. They agree to help each other by sharing expertise so that all the halls reach the goal – Hallmark Level 1.

### Programme

1. Hallmark Hubs: fast-tracking the process
2. Hallmark Level 1 Guidance (including Information Pack)
3. Hallmark Level 2 Guidance (including Information Pack)

The event will take place on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October from 10.00am – 2.30pm at The Wilson Centre, Long Newton, TS21 1DD (just off the A66 west of Stockton on Tees). There is no charge for the training and a light lunch will be provided. This is a regional training event provided by Tees Valley Rural Community Council.

If you would like more information or to book a place please contact Helen on 01207 529621 or email [helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk](mailto:helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk) by Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October

### Get Involved...

A free workshop for voluntary and community groups on the work of Parliament, its processes, and how you can engage with them for the benefit of your community



Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011 10am – 1pm (registration from 9.30am)  
Durham Amateur Rowing Club, City Boathouse, Green Lane, Durham

#### The workshop will cover:

- The work of MPs and members of the House of Lords
- Legislation
- Select Committees
- Questions and Debates
- Accessing Useful Information

To book a place contact James on 0191 3844801 or email [admin.cvs@btconnect.com](mailto:admin.cvs@btconnect.com)

### 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 me on the details below.

### VILLAGE-VOICE Contact

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