



VILLAGE-VOICE

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

The staff and board of DRCC would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Community Legal Clinics for Community Buildings

DRCC held a series of community legal clinics throughout November focusing on some of the key issues affecting community buildings – governing documents, insurance and leases. The meetings were well attended by a variety of groups including both council owned and non-council owned buildings and community partnerships. Feedback from the events was positive and if there is sufficient interest we may look to run a future session in the New Year. The subjects covered are very topical in light of Durham County Council's Community Buildings Review and delegates were provided with a series of hand-outs covering the issues discussed in the clinics. Information was also gathered at the events about organisation's individual circumstances and any specific issues are being followed up by DRCC staff.



If you would like to register your interest in attending a future session please contact Helen on 01207 529621 or email helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk

Competitive Insurance Cover for Community Buildings and Groups

DRCC offers competitively priced insurance cover that is specifically designed to meet the needs of Community Buildings and Community Groups. Our cover is:

- Wide ranging - everything from buildings and contents to public liability. We can even arrange specialist one off policies e.g. for local events and allotments.
- Underwritten by Zurich Insurance, one of Britain's largest insurance providers.
- Managed through a long established local broker who knows the area and can deal with enquiries and claims quickly and efficiently through personal contact - we don't use distant call centres.
- Very competitive – we work closely with our Brokers and Insurers to ensure that you receive good value cover that is actually right for your needs. We are also working hard to keep costs down. In 2012 many of our premiums will be up to 10%* lower than 2011, which is great news for hard-pressed community groups during difficult economic times.

If you aren't yet using DRCC's Insurance Service, why not ask us for a no obligation quotation. Please contact Russell Hayward on 01207 529621 for more information or e-mail

Russell.Hayward@durhamrcc.org.uk and remember, DRCC is a not for profit registered charity; any income that we earn from our insurance helps to support the services that we provide for rural communities across County Durham.

(*Minimum premiums unchanged from 2011 apply; cover is subject to insurance premium tax of 6%)

ENERGY EFFICIENCY NEWS

Surviving Winter Campaign

This UK wide campaign aims to help people who are adversely affected by cold weather, including the elderly, those with disabilities, families with small children living in fuel poverty, and the homeless. Locally the campaign is being managed by the County Durham Community Foundation. An appeal has been launched that calls for those who can afford to forego their Winter Fuel Payment to donate it to the Surviving Winter Appeal in order to help those for whom it is not nearly enough.

Applications to the fund are open to both community and voluntary groups, and individuals over the age of 18 who have a low household income and are considered to be in fuel poverty.

For more information about how to donate, what can be applied for, and how to make an application, contact Jacqueline Cooke on 0191 378 6346/jacqueline@cdcf.org.uk, or go to the County Durham Community Foundation website: www.cdcf.org.uk where you can download an application form.

Warm Homes Discount

Recent increases in energy prices are stretching everyone's budgets but for the most vulnerable it can be a serious cause for concern. Therefore it is important that those most in need of help know what is available. The Warm Homes Discount started in April 2011 and is funded by energy suppliers, replacing the old Social Tariff and voluntary arrangements to provide financial support to vulnerable customers. All the big suppliers are signed up to this scheme.

Under the scheme, in 2011/12 households in receipt of the guarantee element of Pension Credit will automatically receive an annual discount of £120 from their electricity bills.

Other vulnerable households will also be eligible but the criteria for this 'Broader Group' varies between suppliers and this group needs to apply for the discount. If you think you might fall within this group, or know someone else who might, you should contact your supplier. If you prefer to get advice from another source, you can also contact Consumer Direct (08454 04 05 06) or visit your local CAB.

Vulnerable customers may also qualify for the **Priority Services Register**. All energy suppliers have an obligation to provide a range of free services to customers who are of pensionable age and have a disability, are chronically sick, visually impaired or have hearing difficulties. Examples of what this service can include are a gas safety check, help with moving a meter if it is in an inconvenient position, and help with difficulties in using certain appliances.

For more information on these or any other queries regarding energy efficiency contact Liz Charles on 01207 529621/liz.charles@durhamrcc.org.uk



Renewable Energy – Change to Feed In Tariffs for Solar Panels

As you may have seen recently in the press, the UK Government is proposing to reduce Feed-in Tariffs (FITs) for new solar photovoltaic installations as part of their comprehensive review consultation. If you install solar PV panels and your Feed In Tariff application is submitted to your supplier on or after 12th December 2011, you could be affected by the proposals. Initially a reduced rate for solar PV installations was to come into force on 1st April 2012 but this has been brought forward to 12th December 2011 (although this is still under consultation). Therefore any panels installed after 12th December would receive a new tariff for schemes up to 4kW in size of 21.0p/kWh – down from the current 43.3p/kWh. Reduced rates are also proposed for schemes between 4Kw and 250Kw. In response to this the Church of England is calling on the Government to slow down their plans to drop the rate of returns to give churches and other community groups more time to complete their installations.

The online petition can be viewed at <https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/20928>

Incentives available for Renewable Heat

Businesses and communities can now apply for payments under the government's Renewable Heat Incentive scheme. The scheme, which opened to applicants on Monday 28 November, will provide payments for heat generated from renewable technologies. These include biomass boilers, solar thermal equipment and heat pumps installed since 15 July 2009. Recipients will be paid up to 7.9p per kWh for biomass boilers, 8.5p per kWh for solar thermal and up to 4.5p per kWh for heat pumps. Organisations will be able to apply to Ofgem for support under the scheme from Monday 28 November and will receive payments on a quarterly basis for heat generated over 20 years.

For more information please visit www.ofgem.gov.uk/e-serve/RHI/Pages/RHI.aspx

(Information taken from Ruralcity Media)

South Durham Halls website launched by CAVOS

CAVOS launched a new community buildings website www.southdurhamhalls.org.uk covering the former Sedgfield borough area at their annual stakeholder event on Monday 21st November.

The website currently showcases twenty village halls, community centres and church halls and aims to help potential hirers decide on the most suitable venue for their activity or event, and to help local residents find out what is happening in their community. More halls will also be coming on board with the website over the next few weeks.

The website will be managed by Helen Brown at CAVOS which is an umbrella organisation established in 2000 that provides help, support and advice to community and voluntary groups across the former Sedgfield borough area.

The website has been developed in response to research carried out by CAVOS earlier this year that found although there are many organisations working and looking to deliver community based services in the area e.g. training, exercise classes, advice and guidance sessions, the majority of these organisations were not aware of the range of the community venues in the area and the facilities they have to offer. It was felt that this could be improved by a joint website which would help those looking to hire venues make bookings more easily and find out about their facilities, availability and hiring rates at the touch of a button.

The website was received very positively when it was launched at the event on Monday with one attendee commenting: "Really good website – easy to use and informative. I enjoyed the background information to the buildings." It has been funded by CAVOS and the Big Lottery through their Awards for All programme.

As well as specific information on halls in the area, there is also information on the local Area Action Partnerships, Local Learning Partnerships, Volunteering and Renewable Energy.

For more information about the website please contact Helen at CAVOS on 01388 811115, email helen@cavos.org.uk or visit www.southdurhamhalls.org.uk

Does your organisation need help with IT?

Organisations from across the region can obtain free IT advice and support thanks to further funding from the Northern Rock Foundation. CITA's 'Circuit Rider' programme helps voluntary and community organisations to reduce their administrative costs and work more effectively. Book an IT 'health check' for general advice on how to improve your organisation's IT systems. Alternatively, you can obtain support focussed on a particular issue of relevance to your organisation.

Recent examples of support through this programme include:

- helping an organisation to make big savings by reviewing their IT spend
- providing loan IT equipment to an organisation that had no computers of its own
- support with marketing through developing a social media strategy
- advice on how to reduce costs by using cloud computing
- aiding an organisation to meet best practice with regard to data protection by enhancing security procedures

Whatever the size and needs of your organisation, CITA aim to leave you stronger and better able to manage your IT. This programme is fully-funded by the Northern Rock Foundation so you don't need to pay a penny for the support you receive. If your organisation would like to benefit from this programme give CITA a call on 0191 256 5015. For more information visit <http://communityitacademy.org/circuitriding>

Tell us about your Superfast Broadband Needs

The Digital Durham programme aims to bring superfast broadband to every single home, business and community. If you live or run a business in County Durham we'd like you to take part in our survey and let us know about your superfast broadband needs.

The survey results will assist in gauging local demand for superfast broadband; supporting services such as IT training and the availability of affordable computer equipment; and help clarify where internet services are slow or even unavailable; complete the survey at www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=8540

Please contact 03000 261 160 or email digital.durham@durham.gov.uk if you're unable to take part online or for further information about the programme.

Changes to PRS and PPL Licensing for Community Buildings

On 1 January 2011, the law was changed and community buildings playing recorded music in public are now, in almost all cases, required to hold a PPL licence as well as a PRS for Music licence.

From 2012, a new joint music licence for community buildings will be introduced incorporating charges from both *PRS for Music* and PPL. PPL is operating a one year "grace period" and will not charge community buildings for their recorded music use during 2011. *PRS for Music* will act as an agent for PPL so you will continue to deal with a single point of contact for your music licensing needs.

The new joint licence will take effect from 1 January 2012, but charges won't be applied until your 2012 annual review – therefore your joint licence invoice may include a back payment to cover this

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between *PRS for Music* and PPL?

Copyright law exists to protect music in different ways. Businesses and organisations that play music in public will often require a licence from both *PRS for Music* and PPL. *PRS for Music* collects and distributes fees for the use of musical compositions (including lyrics) on behalf of songwriters, composers and music publishers. PPL collects and distributes fees for the use of recorded music on behalf of record companies and performers.

2. How has the law changed regarding community buildings?

The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (referred to below as the 1988 Act) states that playing music in public requires the permission of the copyright owner. Playing in public (also referred to as public performance) has a wide legal meaning covering the playing of music other than in a domestic setting. It therefore includes the use of music in community buildings, and *PRS for Music* has licensed such buildings for many years. PPL has similarly licensed the public performance of recorded music for many years (with this licence covering the use of the recording itself), having been established in 1934. However, the 1988 Act previously contained exceptions which meant that, if certain conditions were met, a PPL licence was not required where recorded music was played in public as part of the activities of charities and certain other not-for-profit organisations. Therefore, in the past PPL has not licensed community buildings. These exceptions have been revoked following a government consultation, with effect from 1 January 2011. From that date, community buildings playing recorded music are no longer exempt from requiring a PPL licence in addition to a *PRS for Music* licence. However, PPL is operating a 'grace period' throughout 2011, so community buildings will only require a PPL licence from 1 January 2012.

3. How does this affect my existing *PRS for Music* licence?

If you are a community building using recorded music you will now require a PPL licence as well as a *PRS for Music* licence. *PRS for Music* and PPL are working together to offer a joint licence, available through *PRS for Music*, as a one-stop solution to community buildings' music licensing requirements. Please note that a PPL licence will not be required if you only feature live bands, or in the unlikely event that the recorded music you play is not controlled by PPL. A *PRS for Music* licence is not required in the unlikely event that the only music you play, either recorded or during live events, is not controlled by *PRS for Music*.

4. What will happen and when?

You do not need to take any action until your existing *PRS for Music* licence is due for its annual review in 2012. We will contact you nearer the time with more information about converting to the new joint licence, and will explain what you need to do. PPL's charges for community buildings will be very similar to the existing *PRS for Music* charges, and will be based on the same definition of 'income' to keep things simple for community buildings.

5. How will the joint licence be administered?

The joint licence will be administered by *PRS for Music*, acting on its own behalf and on behalf of PPL. *PRS for Music* will continue to be your point of contact for any queries or changes regarding your licence, and you will make a single payment of fees to *PRS for Music* (who will then pass on the PPL element of those fees to PPL).

6. What will the PPL charges be?

To provide a simple solution for customers, PPL's tariff for community buildings will be very similar to the existing *PRS for Music* tariff. In particular, it applies to the same types of community buildings as *PRS for Music* tariff CB and uses the same definition of "income". In summary, the PPL charges will be calculated as follows:

- For community buildings with an annual income of £10,000 or less: £42 per annum (subject to annual adjustment for inflation)
- For community buildings with an annual income of over £10,000: 1% of annual income

PRS for Music charges continue to be calculated as: 1% of annual income subject to a min charge of £42 per annum

7. Will backdated charges apply?

Although the change in the law took effect on 1 January 2011, PPL is operating a 'grace period' throughout 2011, so community buildings will only need a PPL licence from 1 January 2012. To try to keep things as simple as possible, community buildings will keep the same annual review date that applies to their existing *PRS for Music* licence. This means that, if your review date falls partway through 2012, your initial joint licence invoice will incorporate a one-off additional PPL charge for the period between 1 January 2012 and your review date. So for example, if your review date is 1 July 2012, your initial joint licence invoice will include a PPL back payment covering 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2012, as well as the PPL and *PRS for Music* charges for the subsequent 12 months. For more information visit www.prsformusic.com/Pages/ppljointlicence.aspx or telephone 0845 140 0090

Big Lottery Reaching Communities Programme - Buildings Strand Eligibility Updates

The Big Lottery is making the following small but significant changes to the eligibility of the Reaching Communities buildings strand:

1. To Introduce IMD 2010 data on top of IMD 2007 data

The funding is targeted at buildings or sites based in the most deprived 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOAs) in England, using data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Now that IMD 2010 data is available we have added any new LSOAs that fall within the three criteria listed below to the original LSOAs identified using IMD 2007. All existing 2007 LSOAs will still be eligible even if they are no longer classified as being among one of these three categories.

2. To increase the urban percentage from 15 per cent to 20 per cent

We are increasing the urban threshold to 20 per cent which brings it in line with other approaches to targeting deprived areas. There are no other immediate changes and we remain very much open to applications to support projects that improve or replace existing buildings where a wide range of community activities take place. The online eligibility checker has been updated to incorporate 2010 IMD data and now includes the following eligible areas:

- the most deprived 20 per cent of LSOAs categorised as urban
- the most deprived 20 per cent of LSOAs categorised as rural (town and fringe)
- the most deprived 50 per cent of LSOAs categorised as rural (villages/hamlets/isolated dwellings).

If your project is based near an eligible area and primarily serves beneficiaries in that area then we may make an exception and allow you to apply:

Exceptions Process

The focus of this funding is to support people and communities most in need and we have used the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data to ensure that our funding is targeted at buildings or sites based in the most deprived 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOA's). We recognise that geographical boundaries don't give us the full story so if your project is based close to an eligible area we may consider making an exception and inviting you to apply for funding. This gives us the flexibility to respond to anomalies whilst we discuss further improvements to our strategy for funding capital projects. We will review each case individually to ensure that the following principles are met. Please note that it is unlikely that we will change the eligibility of a project unless a compelling case is made. We will not consider any projects that do not meet these criteria.

- The building must be near an eligible LSOA.
- The building must mainly serve beneficiaries in an eligible LSOA(s).
- The majority of beneficiary numbers must be based in an eligible LSOA(s).

If you feel that you meet the above criteria, and are eligible to apply, please email rcbexceptions@biglotteryfund.org.uk answering the following questions:

1. What is the postcode of the building or site you wish to use, and which areas/LSOA(s) do you aim to serve?
2. Roughly, what is the distance between the building and the beneficiaries in the eligible LSOA?
3. How do you know there is a need for this building to serve the beneficiaries in the eligible LSOA? Estimate what percentage of your beneficiaries will come from each LSOA served.
4. What other facilities are available for the beneficiaries to use in the eligible LSOA?
5. Tell us a little about your project - what services and activities do you intend to run?

We aim to respond within 10 working days but if this is not possible, we will let you know. Finally, please note that BIG's decision is final and there is no appeals process.

Future Developments

We will be completing a detailed review of how best the Big Lottery Fund can support community buildings and capital projects in the future. We want views from national, regional and community level stakeholders to help shape this future funding. This is your opportunity to tell us what you think of our current funding offer and how it could be improved to better meet the needs of people and communities most in need with a limited amount of funding available. If you would like to register your interest in this discussion, please email us on rcbreview@biglotteryfund.org.uk Further details will be made available in due course.

Surface Water Drainage Concessions from Northumbrian Water

The present interim concession offered by Northumbrian Water to community organisations, village halls and other charities of being allowed to pay Surface Water Drainage Charges on the lowest Band (£109.30/year) means that other customers are paying slightly more. I use the word "slightly" deliberately as it turns out to be less than the price of a 2 Mars Bars/year.

Their willingness to continue this "cross subsidy" was tested through a public survey that Northumbrian Water (NW) commissioned in October/November from the marketing research company, Explain Research. The results were important because the interim concession ends in March 2012 and it is worth in the region of £1million/year to the sector.

Two surveys took place. a) a street survey throughout the region involving over 1100 people targeted on the basis of age, geography and social grade classification popular with marketing companies. b) an on-line survey in which 301 people responded. Both surveys aimed to discover whether people were willing to pay "a small amount" extra to allow some community organisations to pay less.

Overall 45% of the 1104 people questioned in the street survey were willing to pay up to £1/year more to allow some community organisations to pay less. It is "some" because, by NW's own reckoning, 60% of those organisations eligible for the current concession have a small enough property to be on the lowest band anyway.

Similar questions were asked on the on-line survey. The overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) were willing to pay more - on average £3.50 more. Unlike the street survey, respondents were asked if they were members of organisations with an interest in the outcome. Because of efforts to publicise widely the on-line survey to voluntary and community groups, not surprisingly, 86% were "members" and were considered to have a clear interest in the outcome. As a consequence of this perceived bias, the two surveys were not combined to reach an overall figure of willingness to pay more.

NW concluded that the results of the survey were inconclusive. In view of the Government's plans to expand the idea of social tariffs, which might involve a future review of all charges, NW proposed to continue the interim concession for at least 12 months until these uncertainties were resolved and, at the same time, gather more information as to customers' attitude towards cross-subsidy and the impact of its removal or change. This plan needs to be agreed by the water industry's economic regulator - OFWAT.

The suggestion that one way round the problem would be for NW shareholders to dip into their dividend distribution (£70 million earlier this year) was rejected but a commitment was made to continue NW's community programme at present levels. In addition NW would offer advice to customers as to how they could reduce their surface water drainage impact through soak-aways etc.

Although it was disappointing that NW did not make the concession permanent, some positives have emerged. As a result of drawing attention to the concession, a number of voluntary and community organisations have applied for the concession and a few have saved well over £1000. So if your organisation pays for water & drainage, it is well worth looking at your last water bill to confirm that it has received the concession for Surface Water Drainage charges, is in Band 1 and paying no more than £109.30/year.

(Update by George Courtice)

Appointment of North Pennine Dales Leader Community Buildings Officer

We are delighted to announce that Helen Brown has been successful at interview for the North Pennine Dales Leader post for a Community Buildings Officer. Helen brings a great deal of experience and local knowledge to the post which has been jointly funded by DRCC, Weardale AAP and North Pennines Leader. Helen will begin her new job in January and will be working closely with community buildings in Weardale, Teesdale and Tynedale. If you manage a community building in that area please don't hesitate to contact Helen for advice on 01207 529621 or email helen.brown@durhamrcc.org.uk

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. We have just passed the **200** mark for the number of groups we circulate the Village E Voice too - 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

VILLAGE-VOICE Contact

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