



V O L U N T A R Y
A C T I O N
C U M B R I A

Village Hall Update April 2000

- **WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?**

Hi, this is the first in a series of news updates from your local Village Hall Advice Service provider, **Voluntary Action Cumbria**. This service is free to you courtesy of a number of funders including the Countryside Agency and select local authorities.

The service is very comprehensive and extremely friendly. If you have questions, concerns, desires or wishes for your local village hall, please talk to us. Specifically we can offer advice and information on:

- **Project planning and development**
- **Fundraising and building comprehensive funding packages**
- **Serving your community**
- **Technical and legal advice, and much, much more!**

Please remember that we are here to help in any way that we can, so if you feel that your village hall management committee could use some help, advice or guidance please contact Anne Bilbrough or Jonathan Walkingshaw at the following address:

**Voluntary Action Cumbria
The Old Stables
Redhills
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 0DT**

Tel.: (01768) 242130 Fax: (01768) 242134

Vac@dial.pipex.com

Coming together to share the service that Voluntary Action Cumbria provides to Village Halls seemed to present a great opportunity to review the quality and efficiency of the service and see if we can make improvements.

But it is also an opportunity for us to say what we would like **from you** so that we *can* ensure the most beneficial and efficient service and help to share information and inspiration countywide.

We feel that certain information is vital to our providing a good service and that information needs to be accurate. As our start to ensuring we have that information we ask you to take a few minutes to complete and return the Village Hall Questionnaire enclosed.

The information will help us to help you with things like funding bids for refurbishments, new ideas to improve services or add new ones and identifying information or training events which will help. It will also help us as an organisation to respond to concerns about decline in services or alternative means of providing services. If you would like to make any comments about this newsletter or any of the changes we're suggesting please do so.

Please don't confuse this questionnaire with the "Joint Services 2000" sheet. This form is about the general village hall use *as well as* any co-located services and for updating our records. It is really important that both forms are completed separately as they are being used for different purposes. However, you can return them both in the prepaid envelope enclosed.

- ***WORKSHOPS IN, CONFERENCES OUT!***

It has become traditional here at VAC to provide an annual conference for Village Hall Management Committee representatives. These events have provided an opportunity for people facing the same trials and tribulations from across the county to meet and discuss issues of interest whilst guest speakers share their expertise on hot topics. In general these events have been very well received and strongly supported, however it is time for us to take a daring step into the unknown and provide something new! This year we at VAC are going to offer training workshops on particular issues to furnish village hall management committees with the skills and know-how to tackle problems themselves.

The first event is planned for summer 2000 and will be tackling the issue of energy efficiency in community buildings in a refreshing and interactive way. More details will be released as they are available – watch this space!

- **THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is a progressive and far reaching piece of legislation which endeavours to lay to waste the inequalities faced by those people with disabilities in society today. That is to say that a person with impaired vision should be offered a Braille menu to order from when dining in a restaurant, and someone with impaired hearing should be able to listen to a presentation in an auditorium with the assistance of an induction loop. In short, inconveniences faced by disabled people stem not from the disability, but from the constructs of the society in which we live. This legislation intends to remove at least some of the barriers that make life for disabled people so difficult.

As a service provider it is unlawful for a village hall management committee to treat disabled people less favourably than they would treat other people, for reasons relating to their disability, when offering or providing goods, facilities or services. The first rights of access came into law shortly after the Act on **2nd December 1996**. Since this date service providers have been unable, in law, to refuse service, provide a worse service or offer a service on worse terms to a disabled person for a reason relating to the person's disability.

From 1st October 1999 Service providers, such as village hall management committees, have been required to:

- make reasonable adjustments to *policies procedures and practises* that exclude disabled people;
- provide *auxiliary aids and services* to enable or make it easier to use a service; and
- Where a *physical feature* is a barrier to service, find a reasonable alternative method of delivering the service.

These demands are by no means small and can cost; however that is not a reasonable defence in the eyes of the law for non-compliance. What's more, in the **year 2004** the demands of the Act grow further still, so now is the time to take action. There are many sources of funding to assist in the provision of those measures necessary to ensure complete compliance with the Act and there are many sources of advice and information. Don't get caught out, act today by calling *Anne Bilbrough* or *Jonathan Walkingshaw* on (01768) 242130.

- **VILLAGE HALLS AND THE NATIONAL LOTTERY CHARITIES BOARD**

The NLCB have provided a substantial amount of financial support for village halls in the county, indeed as I type this newsletter another four offer letters are winging their way to four successful Cumbrian village halls. In the last six months VAC have advised village hall committees that have subsequently attracted almost £1,000,000 cumulatively into the county.

Such a level of support for village halls is extremely encouraging, particularly in Cumbria where due to issues of isolation and the continuing decline in rural services, the village hall is often the only accessible community service centre.

What's more, the NLCB are now making it easier to produce a careful and considered application for the refurbishment or construction of a community building. Since the beginning of April 2000 the NLCB have been offering 5% of the total project costs (up to a maximum of £25,000) towards the production of a professional feasibility study.

To get an application pack from the NLCB telephone (0345) 919191 today, but please remember to stipulate that it is for a building project! For more information about the NLCB and other funders that support village hall projects please contact Anne Bilbrough or Jonathan Walkingshaw on (01768) 242130.

- **JOINT SERVICES 2000**

Voluntary Action Cumbria have recently been asked to assist in a research project being undertaken for the Countryside Agency called "Joint Services 2000". It involves a survey of 'Multi purpose outlets/service centres' in the counties of Cornwall, Cumbria, Norfolk, Kent and Nottinghamshire.

We are all aware that services in rural areas have declined in recent years but there have also been some interesting and innovative actions undertaken to provide new ways of maintaining or delivering services whether from a building or a vehicle. For example Post Office services being provided at a local pub. At present there is no clear picture of how extensive or how varied these initiatives are.

We know that Village Halls are traditionally used by a variety of local groups, ie WI, Parish Council etc, but what we are looking for here are examples where **different services provided by or involving two or more agencies have located together in order to continue providing a service to a rural community or in order to provide a community with a service they wouldn't have otherwise.**

This might be a monthly Chiropody clinic run by the Local Health Authority or computer courses run by a college who hook up a mobile unit to the village hall. We need to What, Where and Who For example:

Venue	Rockcliffe Village Hall
Services	Village hall plus sports facility, post office
Operational Partners	Village hall committee, Co-operative Society, Parish Council, Post Office Counters Ltd

If your Village Hall does have such use we would be most grateful if you could spare 5 minutes to complete and return the enclosed **Joint Services 2000** form to Anne Bilbrough, at Voluntary Action Cumbria **by 21st April 2000**. A prepaid envelope is enclosed for your convenience. If you have any queries please phone me on 01768 242130. Thank you.

- ***A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR***

We are pleased to inform you that VAC is now an incorporated body soon to appoint its first Board of Directors who will also be Trustees of the Charity. We are taking this opportunity to review the organisation's general membership to ensure as broad a representation as possible.

This membership is free of charge and has a number of benefits; copies of our quarterly magazine Countywide will be circulated and you will receive an invitation to attend two Rural Policy Briefings each year. We undertake to keep members informed of all the events, training sessions and seminars organised by VAC staff. **Membership does not bring any obligations in terms of Trusteeship.**

If your Village Hall Management Committee would like to join as a member please contact the VAC office for a membership form.

VILLAGE HALL QUESTIONNAIRE

April 2000

Name of Hall

Location

Parish

Name of contact

Address of contact

please include post code

Phone number

Fax/e-mail

Please list regular activities at the hall and who runs them

ie weekly play group run by Tumble Tots

pensioners club run by Village Hall Committee

Are you considering major repair/renovation to your hall in the near future?

Are you planning any major events this year that we could report on?

Please will you provide a list of your current Village Hall Committee

Thank you for your assistance. Please return this form in the prepaid envelope provided.