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# Village Hall Update

~ April 2008 ~



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*Carl Glynn*

The Village Hall Update is the newsletter of Cumbria's Village Hall Advice Service. It is produced by VAC for the benefit of all Village Hall Management Committees across Cumbria.

## Ringing in ~ the changes!



For the past four years since I came into post and launched the Telephone Advice Service, Tuesday has been the day to contact me to talk through your general queries and in some cases to organise a visit to speak to the whole Committee.

VAC has undergone some recent internal reorganisation, and as a result of this Tuesday is now the only day when most VAC staff are available for meetings and planning workshops and events. Indeed, some of you who have recently tried to contact me on a Tuesday will have found me unavailable.

Given its success, and the value of knowing when you can contact me that's been expressed to me through feedback, the Telephone Advice Service is still continuing, just on a different day. **Wednesday** is now the day to call me, or to leave a message for me to call you back.

When the Telephone Advice Service was set up, there was the option to contact me later in the evening every third Tuesday of the month, where I stayed until 8pm. The take up for this was virtually none existent, and whilst I was able to busy myself with other work, the number of calls didn't justify my working into the evening.

Things change and needs change, and if the demand is there for people to be able to contact me later in the evening then it is something that could possibly be reviewed.

The provision of me being at my desk for a full day each week is a substantial undertaking and commitment, given that the role is part time, operating three days a week.

My other two 'days' comprise of a variety of activities. I say 'days', as quite often they're evenings, as I'll be meeting with a Village Hall Management Committee at one of their meetings to talk through a particular query or concern.

Meeting at times that are convenient to yourselves is something we've always prided ourselves on doing at VAC, and it is something that we will continue to do so, so please don't feel that I won't be able to attend a meeting with you just because it's in the evening.

All I ask though is at least a month's notice of your planned meeting so that I can co-ordinate my diary.

When I'm not at Village Hall Management Committee meetings, I often attend various meetings, events, seminars and training, either locally or nationally, to represent the needs and issues of Village Halls, and to keep abreast of the changes, and to disseminate the information by means such as this newsletter.

VAC also regularly feeds concerns back to Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) our national umbrella organisation. There are approximately 9,000 Village Halls in England, and each of the 38 rural counties have a fellow Rural Community Council that provides a Village Hall Advice Service.

Using this weight of numbers, ACRE has successfully lobbied on behalf of Village Halls a number of times.



The National Village Halls Forum is a grassroots organisation representing Village Hall Management Committees nationally.

It was founded in 1983 to:

- Exchange and disseminate information about Village Halls in England.
- Represent Village Halls at a national level, i.e. Government, PRS etc about the concerns facing Village Halls in respect of changes in legislation.

The National Village Halls Forum would like to invite Village Halls to take advantage of the special introductory offer of £10.00 for full individual membership. For more information contact:

The Secretary  
NVHF  
c/o Wayside Cottage  
36 West Morden  
Wareham  
Dorset  
BH20 7DN

[mary.mathers@btinternet.com](mailto:mary.mathers@btinternet.com)



## Wildlife at Community Buildings



Village Halls and Community Centres that are already considering a play area, car parking, building renovation or energy efficiency audit might find it a good time to think about wildlife in the area surrounding the building too!

Wildlife is not confined to 'wild places', as it thrives all around us; in our gardens, parks, on roadsides and derelict land. Creating green spaces at community buildings can provide important areas for plants, animals and insects to thrive. The buildings themselves provide shelter and a wealth of nesting sites.

This 'variety of life' or Biodiversity, is worth conserving as it is the life support system providing oxygen, water, food and shelter for all life forms. This alone is a good reason for conserving wildlife, but there are lots of other good reasons:

**Environmental:** enhance and protect species/habitats; contribution to reduce impact on climate change; heritage value

**Community:** Involvement through volunteering; increased environmental awareness/education

**Economic:** enhanced appearance may lead to more income through building usage/hiring

Help is available to:

- Identify potential improvements/ benefits to enhance species and habitats
- Create opportunities to encourage local volunteer involvement
- Identify funding for proposed projects

For help to develop a project, e.g. tree planting, herb garden, stone wall repair, wildlife pond, bug hotels, wildflower areas, bird/bat boxes....

Contact:

Christine McLaren  
Project Officer

Wildlife at Community Buildings

Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust  
The Old Stables, Redhills, Penrith, CA11 0DT

Tel: 01768 869 537

Email: [christinem@ruralcumbria.org.uk](mailto:christinem@ruralcumbria.org.uk)

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## Site Area Charging for Village Halls



United Utilities is implementing a new way of calculating the charge it applies to non-domestic customers for surface water and highway drainage. This is not an additional charge; United Utilities will not receive any net gain in revenue, they are collecting it based on the site area of a premises rather than the rateable value.

This charge is levied where surface water enters into the public sewerage system. This means if you have a hard surfaced car park or hard standing areas and rainwater goes into a grid, you will get charged on the square metreage of that hard surface.

If however the water enters into a soak-away, or your car park is a permeable surface, then your Hall will be exempted from the surface water drainage charge.

Highway drainage is provided for the benefit of the general public. All sewerage customers must pay a contribution towards this part of the sewerage service.

The charges are being phased in over the next three years, but already there are cases where some Halls have seen rises which will have a devastating effect on their finances and threaten their very survival.

VAC, and our partners in Lancashire and Cheshire, are asking ACRE to lobby Ofwat and the Consumer Council for water to seek an exemption or reclassification for Village Halls and similar community facilities. Several other water companies are moving to calculating charges this way, so it should soon be heard as a national voice.

It may take some time for the powers that be to make the necessary changes, so in the meantime Halls severely affected might benefit from investigating if a soak-away is applicable. This will attract fees from a Surveyor in itself, but there is likely to be assistance with those fees.

Halls that are considered resurfacing their car park might well consider a product called 'inovgreen'. This provides a permeable yet hard surface that can be grassed or gravelled that's ideally suited for parking areas in an area of such beauty as ours.

Contact me for more information or assistance on this topic.



## Cumbria Calor Village of the Year® Competition 2008

**Is your village vibrant, enterprising and caring? Does it make the most of local opportunities? Are you proud of your community and do you want to gain recognition for its achievements?**

Voluntary Action Cumbria would like to invite you to enter the Cumbria Calor Village of the Year® Competition 2008. This competition is all about recognising well-balanced, proactive and caring communities which, irrespective of size, have made the best of local opportunities to maintain and enhance the quality of life for everyone living there.

The closing date for entries by email / post is **4pm Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008**.

This competition is open to all villages in Cumbria with a population of 5000 or less. Only one entry per village will be accepted so we recommend consulting other community groups and interested parties before applying. Entries must also be supported by the Parish Council, even if another community group has coordinated the entry.

The competition assesses communities on four aspects of rural village life: **People, Environment, Business** and **Communications**. Villages can enter as many or as few of these categories as they wish and are also asked to explain in fewer than 500 words "Why our village is a special place". The overall county winner will have the opportunity to represent Cumbria in the national Calor Village of the Year® for England competition and win a slice of over £40,000 prize money.

The Cumbria Calor Village of the Year® Competition 2008 is coordinated by Voluntary Action Cumbria and sponsored by Calor. Further information and a copy of the entry form and guidelines can be found on the VAC website [www.ruralcumbria.org.uk](http://www.ruralcumbria.org.uk) or by contacting Hellen Aitken on Tel: 01768 869520 or Email: [hellenaitken@ruralcumbria.org.uk](mailto:hellenaitken@ruralcumbria.org.uk)



## World Heritage Status for the Lake District?

VAC is a member of the task group which is looking at how to involve communities in the proposed bid to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for the Lake District to have status as a World Heritage Site.

### What does it all mean?

- World Heritage Status means that the Lake District would be recognised by the international community as an area of universal significance.
- There should be opportunities to create public/private partnerships to draw in new funding, which in turn can benefit the wider community. The government has signed a convention to protect all World Heritage Sites, and has pledged to provide adequate resources for their protection. At a time when funding for rural England is under significant pressure, the government (and its agencies) would consequently find it harder to ignore funding appeals from an area which has World Heritage status.
- One concern is that the Status would impose even tighter planning restrictions than those already in place but this shouldn't happen and the planning process would remain the same. The majority of World Heritage Sites in the UK and around the world are protected by planning regulations which are actually less stringent than those of a National Park.

### Want to find out more?

The project team leading on the World Heritage bid have a useful website [www.lakeswhs.co.uk](http://www.lakeswhs.co.uk) and during April and May a series of roadshows and workshops will be held around Cumbria (not just the Lake District) so that local people can find out more.

For a list of dates and venues either look at the website or you can phone Mike Clarke, the Director of the Lake District World Heritage Project on 01539 792633.



## In the mood for a spring clean?

Is your Hall in need of a spring clean? Are the walls looking tired and in need of a lick of paint? Is the cost the only thing that's holding you back? Then look no further!

Community Re > Paint is open to **all** Village Halls in Cumbria, providing **free** paint!

The scheme is sponsored by Dulux and Biffa and allows surplus and unwanted paint to be used by community groups rather than it being disposed of in landfill sites.

To find out more, contact Cath & Dennis Graham on 01697 344919



## Are you concerned about your Hall's rising energy costs?

Community Action for Energy is running a one day course called

### 'FINDING OUT ABOUT ENERGY'

Thursday 19th June, 9.30am to 3.45pm  
Grayrigg Village Hall (near Kendal)

This is a great opportunity to learn about energy efficiency, sustainable energy use, renewable energy technologies, and how community energy projects can play an important role in reducing climate-changing carbon dioxide emissions.

It will also include information about grants and support available for projects.

The course is free, and includes refreshments and a light lunch. Participants will also be able to claim a contribution towards travel costs.

If you would like to book a place(s) or want more details, please call

Debbie Binch on 01539 773180

## Energy Monitors



On a related topic to the previous article, VAC has four plug in mains power energy monitors available for Halls to borrow and see how much energy plug in appliances are using.

Simply plug these monitors into the socket, then plug the appliance into the monitor and you can monitor the energy used by each appliance over any given amount of time.

VAC has trialled these, both in the office, and at our homes with some eye-opening results. You'd be surprised at which appliances turn out to most energy demanding, and those that turn out to be relatively innocent.

If you'd like to borrow one of these monitors for your Hall, contact me and I'll send one out.



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## Village Halls Advice Service

The Village Halls Advice Service exists to help keep Village Hall Management Committee members up to date and well informed of any changes relating to Village Halls, and to feed back at regional and national level the needs and concerns of Halls as a collective voice.

The Village Halls Advice Service operates 3 days a week within VAC's Development Team, alongside the Development Officers.

The Village Halls Telephone Advice Service operates every Wednesday on 01768 869525, where the Village Halls Adviser is available to answer your queries.

VAC is the Rural Community Council (RCC) for Cumbria, and works with people and communities to improve the quality of life in rural Cumbria.

VAC provides:

- Advice
- Support
- Understanding
- Advocacy

to communities in Cumbria.

The Village Halls Advice Service is your one stop shop for help and support with all aspects of running a Village Hall, and provides help and assistance of keeping up to date with:

- Charity law
- Legislation (environmental health, licensing, fire safety, employment law etc.)
- Grant aid and assistance

It also provides the following:

- Promotion of building condition surveys and energy audits
- Fund-raising and managing finances
- Annual Village Halls training events
- Regular Village Halls newsletter and information
- Project planning; from refurbishment to repaint
- Site visits to talk through the query with the Committee as a whole
- Access to a legal professional, a specialist in Charity Law

If you have a query or concern on any matter relating to Village Halls, community buildings or a similar organisation or group, please contact:

Carl Glynn **Village Halls Adviser**

**Tel:** 01786 869525 (Wednesdays)

**email:** [carlglynn@ruralcumbria.org.uk](mailto:carlglynn@ruralcumbria.org.uk)

### And finally.....

Although I'm the Editor, this is YOUR newsletter, so if you feel that there are topics you'd like covering please let me know by 17th July 2008.

Carl Glynn

Voluntary Action Cumbria

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Redhills

Penrith

CA11 ODT

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### Don't Forget!

### Display a Copy!

Please put one of the copies of this newsletter in your Hall, where everyone who uses it can see it, so that everyone in your community can benefit from the information.

This newsletter, and previous issues, can also be downloaded from the Village Halls section of the Voluntary Action Cumbria website:

[www.ruralcumbria.org.uk/villagehalls.html](http://www.ruralcumbria.org.uk/villagehalls.html)