



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

Village Halls Managing Risks Toolkit

PEOPLE

- Involving your community - what do people want and need
- Dealing with volunteers, staff, hirers and those using the hall
- Making everyone welcome

LAW & GOVERNANCE

- Your governing document - the rules for how you function
- Roles, responsibilities, and what charity law says you should do
- Health and safety, insurance and other legal requirements

MONEY

- Income - hiring, fundraising, grants
- Spend - planning and budgeting
- Accounting and planning for the future with a Business Plan

BUILDINGS

- Fabric of the building and facilities: cleaning, maintenance, repair
- Making your building accessible
- Use of a formal hiring agreement

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FUND

This toolkit aims to help village hall committees consider the main risks for their hall and to access further information to help manage these risks effectively.

Risk is often a topic which focuses on Health and Safety, or a crisis situation. This toolkit takes a more holistic approach to the range of risks for halls, and categorises these under four key headings of: Law and Governance; People; Money; and Buildings.

We would like to thank the Prince's Countryside Fund for supporting this project and the hall volunteers who have assisted with the development of the toolkit. Their commitment to finding the simplest, practical way to do things right has made this a thorough exploration of risk, far beyond the scope of dealing with a crisis situation.

Summary

We have included a few suggestions on how to use the guide (page 3), to avoid the danger of information overload! By working together to break down the job of identifying and dealing with risks, progress will be much easier. You can always contact ACT if you want to plan your approach with us.

This toolkit groups information about risk under four main headings, reflected in the pictogram on the front cover. These emerged as the areas of greatest concern with our village halls peer group.

- **Law and Governance** (page 4) summarises the guidance on your legal responsibilities and the central pillars to good governance. Understanding and implementing sound governance promotes a strong position from which all other issues can be managed with greater confidence.
- **People** (page 7) and how they interact safely and positively with the village hall, is an area of concern for many. This section looks at some of the things you must do (and many of the things you should do) to maintain a viable and relevant community facility.
- **Money** (page 9) This section includes both technical and practical advice on managing hall finances. Some of this is legally necessary, such as keeping finance records, and some is purely common sense, like working out if you are charging enough.

- **Buildings** (page 11). Of course, this toolkit is all about a building being used by the community, so ensuring the bricks and mortar are safe, accessible and good to use is vital.

No two village hall buildings are the same and structural issues should be dealt with in a manner which is appropriate to the fabric of your building. The resources in this section will give you enough information to make sensible decisions and identify relevant specialists for help when you need it.

We recognise that there is obvious overlap between the issues. For example, the duty of care to protect vulnerable users is both a legal issue and a conversation about people. However, we hope the structure of the toolkit will allow you to quickly find the information you need.

Inevitably there are things which do not fit neatly into this structure which is why we've included a **General** section (page 15) which summarises additional guidance available on village hall topics, including the Hallmark Quality Standard Scheme.

Most of the resources referred to in this toolkit, including all the numbered Village Hall Information Sheets (VHIS), have been produced by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). These are available free to Cumbrian halls by contacting ACT direct. Please contact us so we can help you manage risk, through good practice.

How to use this guide

The way we suggest you use this guide is to:

- Use the diagram on the front cover as a discussion prompt for your committee.
- Consider the main risk areas for your hall - Ask “What keeps me awake at night?”
- Prioritise the issues in the chart below.
- Read the relevant section i.e. Law and Governance, People, Money, Buildings, and General.
- Identify the information to assist you.
- Contact us at ACT to request the relevant information or use the web links where information is available online.

See back page for ACT contact details.

- Identify the actions you can take to address your concerns, with dates and details of who is taking the action and when it will be reviewed, and update the chart below.
- Continue through your priority list requesting the appropriate guidance when you feel ready to address the next topic.
- Record your activity in meeting minutes on a regular basis to show that you are aware of the risks you’ve identified and are addressing them in a managed way.
- If you are unsure at any point, contact us at ACT and we will do our best to help you identify the correct resource to address your need.
- Let us know how you are getting on. Please send us feedback on your experience to help us our support for community buildings. We could also write a case study about your hall.

Managing Risk Chart

Issue	Prompt	Actions (Policy, Practice)	Priority Level	Name	Deadline	Result
What keeps you awake at night?	Has anything prompted you to worry about this?	Action needed to address the issue	Rank in order of importance / urgency	Who will action this?	When will it be done?	How will you know this is resolved?

Trustees Roles and Responsibilities (VHIS 17) – reviewed Feb 2022

Essential reading for anyone involved in running a village hall, everyone on the committee should have a copy and discuss it with new trustees when they join. This guidance breaks down the responsibilities of Charity Trustees (also known as Managing Trustees, or ‘The Committee’) and gives great advice on good practise. Areas covered include:

- Why most village hall charities have two sets of trustees: Charity / Managing Trustees and Holding / Custodian Trustees; who’s who and what this means.
- Charity Trustee responsibilities
- Tips for good practise
- Trustees liability and insurance
- Appointment and retirement of Charity Trustees

Trustee Declaration of acceptance of office (ACRE)

An appendix to VHIS 05 the ACRE Safeguarding information sheet, this form should be signed by each charity trustee when elected, appointed or co-opted onto the committee, to confirm they are eligible to be a trustee and understand the charity’s purposes (objects). It includes a Charity Commission link to the reasons why someone might be disqualified from being a charity trustee.

Health and Hygiene in Village Halls (VHIS 20) – under review

Most halls have facilities for providing light refreshment, and some to prepare full cooked meals. Whatever the level of provision, it’s important to maintain high standards of maintenance and hygiene. This information sheet explains the relevant legislation and suggests a range of standards appropriate for different circumstances. Areas covered include:

- General cleanliness and cleaning schedules
- Food hygiene and safety, guidelines for kitchens, and food business registration
- Provision of toilets
- Appendices:

Cleaning schedule	Health & Safety notice
Food safety checklist	Kitchen ‘food handlers’ notice

Providing food at community and charity events (Food Standards Agency)

Guidance on providing food in a village hall or other community setting for volunteers and charity groups. Includes advice on registration, certificates and allergen information.

www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events

Trustee Indemnity Insurance (VHIS 35) – updated Sept 2013

Most village halls are unincorporated charitable trusts where the charity trustees have personal liability. The best way to protect trustees is to ensure the charity is well managed and good practice is followed, however committees may also want to consider trustee indemnity insurance. Areas covered in this information sheet include:

- How personal liability may arise
- Limiting the risk of personal liability
- Trustee indemnity insurance and public liability insurance

Village Halls run by Parish Councils as Sole Trustee (VHIS 36) – updated Feb 2015

Most village hall charities have two sets of Trustees (Charity / Managing Trustees and Holding / Custodian Trustees). In some circumstances a parish council is 'Sole Trustee' where it essentially fulfils both Charity and Holding Trustee functions. Areas covered in this information sheet include:

- What makes the parish council the Sole Trustee
- When is the parish council the Custodian Trustee, and not the Sole Trustee
- How charity business should be conducted by the parish council
- Parish council making changes to the management arrangements

Village Halls and Incorporation (VHIS 39) – under review

This information sheet provides advice for village hall committees who are considering whether incorporation is appropriate for their hall. Areas covered include:

- Personal liability and protection for charity trustees
- Trustee indemnity insurance
- Why a village hall charity might want to incorporate
- Legal structures for incorporation - CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) recommended
- The incorporation process

Village Halls, governing documents and title deeds (VHIS 40) – reviewed July 2021

The governing document for your village hall charity sets out the charitable objects and rules for the organisation; it states what the charity is for and describes how it is run. Every charity trustee should have a copy and be familiar with it. Many older governing documents are comprised within the document by which the charity acquired the land in the first place – a conveyance, indenture or lease. Areas covered in this information sheet include:

- Different types of governing document and common constitutional structures
- Vesting charity land and property in the Official Custodian for Charities
- What to do if you can't find any governing documents or title deeds
- What to do if the Holding Trustees are deceased or cannot be found
- Making changes to governing documents of village hall charities
- Registration of land and property with the Land Registry
- Responsibilities of Holding / Custodian Trustees (i.e. not the Charity Trustees)

ACRE Model Documents (Charity Commission approved)

Contact ACT for copies of ACRE model village hall documents with guidance notes, such as:

- CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) Constitution for a Village Hall
- Trust Deed (often to assist with amending an existing hall's governing document.)
- Hire Agreement & Standard Conditions of Hire
- Occupational License

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers (VHIS 32) – updated Jan 2016

Making sure your village hall has a sustainable group of volunteer committee members is often an issue, with groups expressing concern about skills shortages and simply not having enough people to share the workload. This information sheet provides guidance on the recruiting and supporting volunteers:

- Methods of recruiting – word of mouth, representatives of user organisations, different targeting techniques, guidance on the administrative requirements.
- Retaining volunteers - considering what motivates volunteers, allocating tasks, recognising input, and clarity of roles and responsibilities.
- Recruiting trustees and trustee liability concerns (see also VHIS 17 on Trustees Roles and Responsibilities and VHIS 35 on Trustee Indemnity Insurance).

Village halls, children and young people (VHIS 34) – Nov 2023

Basic advice to support the hall management committee in welcoming the younger generation to the village hall. The objects of most village halls are to provide a facility for the benefit of the local community without distinction. A charitable village hall should therefore be available to everyone and that includes children and young people in your community who may access the groups, activities and events that take place.

Some young people may wish to hire the hall or become involved by helping the hall committee. Some hall committees may be asked if a child can undertake paid tasks at the hall. This information sheet aims to provide guidance for hall committees and answer often asked questions.

Equality in Village Halls (VHIS 42) – updated Jan 2018

As an organisation which provides facilities or services to the public, village halls are obliged to familiarise themselves with their obligations under the Equalities Act, to protect people from discrimination. This sheet highlights the key concepts and good practice of the Equality Act by detailing:

- Discrimination (indirect and direct) arising from disability.
- Exceptions – Charity exemption, providing services for groups with protected characteristics, clubs and associations, single-sex communal accommodations, religious and belief organisations, age discrimination.
- Guidance on the adjustments and provisions that need to be made to ensure everyone is treated fairly at work or when using the services.
- Appendices: Equality Policy & Statement

Village Hall Surveys and Feedback Form (ACT)

ACT has example surveys you can use to find out what people want and need from your hall. They can be used to help inform day to day management and when you're planning a refurbishment project. If you're looking for grant funding, they can also help to provide the 'evidence of need' to support your funding applications. - Contact ACT for:

- Evaluation form for hirers
- Checklist to identify regular user groups needs
- Example community questionnaire

Money Guidance

Planning fees for village halls (VHIS 01) – updated Nov 2020

Village Halls are not exempt from planning fees. This short information sheet provides details of the regulations and how Parish / Town Councils can help halls to reduce the cost.

Village halls and registration for VAT (VHIS 06) – updated Sept 2022

VAT registration is one of those ‘basic’ VAT issues that can create problems for any organisation. This Information Sheet highlights the relevant rules and provides guidance as to whether your hall charity should, or should not, register for VAT.

Grant Making and Support for community groups (VHIS 13) – May 2021

While many charities can make grants to other charities and good causes it is rarely the case that a charitable village hall, community centre, church hall or similar charitable community building is able to do so.

However, there are other ways in which such community halls can help support local charities, community groups and other good causes. The aim of this information sheet is to set out what is permissible and what is not, and the factors that village hall committees need to consider when they receive a request for help.

VAT on Accessibility Works (VHIS 16) – updated Dec 2022

In reaching out to your community it's important to ensure that your hall has appropriate facilities. VAT legislation provides several reliefs. These are simple cost savings, with minimum administration. One essential criterion is that the recipient organisation is a registered charity. Information produced with the assistance of VATAdvice.

Village halls and VAT on building work and other purchases (VHIS 18) – updated Nov 2017

Produced with the assistance of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in 2017, this detailed information sheet aims to help village halls carrying out building work, or purchasing good and services, to identify potential VAT costs and make VAT savings. NB: this is not a substitute for advice from HMRC. Topics covered include:

- VAT explained
- Supplies to charitable village halls which are: ‘zero-rated’, ‘standard rated’, or which may be ‘reduced rate’.
- Recovery of VAT by local authorities (including Parish Councils)

Village halls rates, waste and water (VHIS 24) – updated May 2015

Village halls are not exempt from paying rates, water and waste charges. This information sheet explains the complex legislation and regulation surrounding charges for non domestic rates, mains water supply, surface water and highway drainage, and waster collection and disposal.

Dealing with VAT on fuel and power (VHIS 26) – updated April 2022

This information sheet aims to help village hall charities minimise the cost of VAT on fuel and power supplies. NB: this is not a substitute for advice from HMRC. It covers:

- Supplies of fuel and power liable to VAT at 5%, 20%, or both.
- ‘Business’ and ‘non-business’ activity and why it is relevant
- Halls heated by oil, LPG or solid fuel; and halls heated by electricity or mains gas
- Halls registered for VAT and halls run or funded by parish councils

Creating a Business Plan (VHIS 28) – December 2010

This information sheet guides village hall management committees through the process of producing a business plan. It includes a 13 point template and guidance on how to pull together a document that examines how the hall delivers for the community now and in the future. Many funders require a plan of some sort and this also helps with planning big projects and longer term fundraising.

- Appendices: Project Risk Assessment Emergencies Risk Assessment
 Project spend template Sample Village Hall Accounts

Accounting and Village Halls (VHIS 41) – reviewed May 2017

Comprehensive information on the financial management of a village hall, which if followed, will safeguard the assets of the charity, manage risks, guide decision making and protect the trustees. A clear and accessible set of information covering:

- Legal obligations including - Keeping records, Preparing accounts, Audit or independent examination, Trustees Annual Report, Reserves policy, Restricted funds, Declaring charitable status, Reporting requirements.
- Financial policies and procedures - Minimum regular reports to the Management/Trustee board, Preparing a budget, Setting hire charges
- Avoiding problems - Cash handling, Payments to trustees, cheque signing, Related people, Contracts, Hiring agreements, Bank Statements, Payments to employees.

Further information from the Charity Commission is available online: www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-reporting-and-accounting-the-essentials-march-2015-cc15c

Making the most of your village hall – Are you charging enough? (ACT)

This ACT guidance sheet looks at reviewing the income you get from your room hire, and whether this is enough for you to cover your costs. If you aren't making enough from people hiring your hall, you will be eating into your reserves and may need to find other sources of funding to keep your hall open.

Available via the ACT website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/What-We-Do/Community-Buildings

ACT's Guide to Funders 2023

Includes guidance on how to write successful funding applications, and lists many potential funders for village hall projects, including contact details and summary of funding available. Available via the ACT website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/What-We-Do/Community-Buildings

Buildings Guidance

Storage in Village Halls (VHIS 08) – reviewed June 2021

A common concern for village hall committees and regular user groups; this information sheet includes practical suggestions and guidance on:

- Maximising storage, or planning to increase storage
- Working with user groups to manage their storage requirements
- Fire safety and other health and safety considerations
- Under-stage storage and creating outside storage areas

Village Halls and car parks (VHIS 12) – updated Feb 2022

This includes clear advice on the general duty of care which Village Hall committees have as trustees, and how this impacts on safe maintenance of parking areas. There is also useful information on contracting with a local authority over recycling bins, wayleave and easement access arrangements, unauthorised parking and abandoned vehicles. Main topics covered include:

- Potholes and adequate lighting.
- Duties towards those using the car park, even if doing so without permission.
- Dealing with snow and ice
- Keeping the building accessible for people with limited mobility
- Being proactive about managing surfaces to avoid costly damage
- EV car charging points

Asbestos in Village Halls (VHIS 14) – reviewed Feb 2022

If your hall was built before the year 2000, it's best to assume asbestos is present. This information sheet explains the three main types of asbestos, the risks, and the village hall committee's legal 'duty to manage asbestos'. It advises on what to do if you suspect your building may contain asbestos, and when to seek expert help.

Overnight accommodation in Village Halls (VHIS 21) – updated April 2022

This guidance goes into detail on the various kinds of overnight stays in village halls, such as guides / scouts, parties and events, bunk barn, camping and emergency use. It sets out the responsibilities to be considered around:

- Safeguarding
- Health & Safety, Fire Safety, Health & Hygiene
- Insurance and Risk Assessment
- Hire charges and conditions

Remember that a clear and comprehensive hiring agreement is essential. ACRE has a tried and tested Model Hiring Agreement.

Planning an extension, refurbishment or new build village hall (VHIS 23) – reviewed Feb 2022

This is not about managing bricks and mortar or about design considerations; it is more about securing funding for improvements or redesign works. It offers guidance on what elements of a project can be funded and the skills and efforts needed for success. Key messages include:

- Understanding your governance, charity status and property title is essential
- Fundraising should be based on good budgeting and business planning
- Gather evidence (statistics and community support) to back up your project – prove that it is needed and that it is the right local solution
- Also includes information about planning permission, building regulations and working with an architect on larger projects, using CDM regulations.

Making your Village Hall accessible (VHIS 25) – under review

This sheet goes into useful detail about the Equalities Act and what might be considered ‘reasonable adjustments’ in order to make a community building accessible.

- Includes a useful ‘DIY’ walk round Access Checklist
- Provides practical and best practice solutions to enable people with a wide range of disabilities and constraints to access facilities and services that are available.

Village Hall Heating (VHIS 30) – Written Nov 2013

This information sheet covers a range of conventional and more bespoke solutions and draws attention to the many considerations associated with choosing a heating system for a community building. Some references may be dated as it was written in 2013. Includes useful tips on:

- Insulation and draught proofing
- Heat conservation, managing condensation and good ventilation
- How to keep costs down by saving energy
- Maintaining a healthy building fabric

Village Hall Flooring (VHIS 31) – Written Jan 2011

The guide looks at a range of flooring options and considers factors like cost, durability and how easy it is to clean. Think about all possible user groups and the areas of the hall which they use. Also includes handy tips on reducing wear and tear, on what will be a large and very occasional investment for any hall. Some references may be dated as it was written in 2011

Fire safety in village halls (VHIS 37) – Updated Jan 2025

This detailed information sheet aims to help village hall committees understand their legal responsibilities when it comes to fire safety. It includes:

- Guidance on carrying out a fire risk assessment in your hall
- Hazards to look out for, which can arise from bad practice over time
- Example periodic fire safety checklist and checklist for hirers

Short Guide to Security (VHIS 38) – reviewed Oct 2023

This information sheet considers the main security risks for a hall: arson; malicious damage (vandalism); and theft. It suggests a proactive approach to boosting security and recommends using a key-holder agreement and an end of session checklist for all users, to ensure fire risk is minimised and opportunistic security breach is avoided. Includes reference to CCTV and data protection, template key holder policy and case study on the use of a swipe-card access system.

Model - Hiring Agreement (ACRE) – 2016 model, includes 2021 and 2022 updates

An essential for all village halls - whenever a hall is hired out a written agreement should be in place. The use of a hiring agreements, such as the ACRE model, establishes a clear contract between two parties and can be used as evidence should legal action become necessary e.g. non payment for hire. The model document has explanatory guidance notes throughout.

- Original 2016 model document and guidance notes,
- Includes: 2021 update to clause 4 (Insurance & indemnity) and clause 9 (Safeguarding)
- Also includes 2022 update in line with the ACRE model Safeguarding policy. (VHIS 05)

Model - Occupational Licence (ACRE) - 2013 Edition

An occupational licence should be used (not a hiring agreement) where a village hall has the opportunity to hire out the whole or part of the hall for each day or part of the days of the week on commercial terms e.g. for a shop, Post Office, doctor's clinic.

Maintaining Your Hall – Building Maintenance / Property Information (ACRE) - 2010 Edition

Regular inspection of a village hall and its surrounding is essential. This comprehensive ACRE publication provides information on what village hall committees need to know about their building and a general framework for maintenance procedures which can be adapted to suit the needs of your hall.

It suggests taking a proactive approach to up-keep, linked to a planned maintenance budget on a rolling programme. Information within complements many of the other village hall information sheets. Main covered include:

- Good maintenance practice; carrying out an inspection; keeping records
- Statutory requirements and legislation which can affect some maintenance work
- Health and safety issues and risk assessment
- Technical considerations for windows, flooring, lighting, plumbing etc.
- External areas: car parks, paths, gutters etc.
- Accessibility; security; storage
- Helpful advice on how to establish and manage contracts for works

Includes useful appendices: Basic property information sheet; Building maintenance checklist; and photos with examples of poor maintenance

General Guidance

The Hallmark Scheme – A quality mark for Village Halls.

Hallmark is a nationally recognised quality standard scheme for the management of community buildings launched by ACRE in 2007. ACT coordinates the Scheme in Cumbria, with the support of volunteer Hallmark Visitors who carry out each peer assessment. There are three Hallmark awards, each must be achieved in the order shown and is valid for three years:

- Hallmark 1 - Charity essentials and administration
- Hallmark 2 - Legislation: safety, licensing and maintenance
- Hallmark 3 - Community & social awareness, communications, forward planning & development

Further information, including Hallmark One checklist and entry form can be found on the ACT website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/hallmark-quality-standard

Health and safety checklist for village and community halls (HSE)

Health and safety shouldn't be a barrier to managing a hall. Taking a sensible and proportionate approach is key to making sure the hall provides a healthy and safe place for people to use without unnecessary bureaucracy.

This guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) focusses predominantly on health and safety issues, not surprisingly. The checklist provides questions to prompt you on:

- Employing staff and links to useful advice.
- Questions around: Car Parks, Movement around the building, Electrical equipment and services, Gas equipment and services, LPG, Asbestos, Fire and Legionnaires disease.

This is available online here: www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/assets/docs/village-hall.pdf

Risk Assessment template (HSE)

Simple guidance on risk assessment and a template to download covering the following:

- Who might be harmed and how
- What you're already doing to control the risks
- What further action you need to take to control the risks
- Who needs to carry out the action
- When the action is needed by

Visit: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm

Parish council help for village halls (VHIS 02) - Reviewed Oct 2021

Information about the ways a parish council can provide financial assistance for a village hall, including access to a low interest Public Works Loan. Also, the important difference between when a parish council is Custodian Trustee (hold the charity property on behalf of the charity and under the instruction of the management committee) and when a parish council is Sole Trustee (also responsible for the management of the charity).

Providing services in village halls (VHIS 03) - Reviewed April 2021

Guidance on the practical considerations for village hall committees where the community needs a venue from which to operate services outside the traditional role of the village hall such as:

- Shops
- Post Offices
- Community Café
- Farmers Markets
- Cinema & Film
- Office Space
- Weddings
- Libraries
- Other Services

It looks at the legal implications, insurance and security, licenses, rates, hire charges and policy.

Entertainment in village halls (VHIS 09) - Updated Feb 2022

Guidance to help village hall committees decide when it is necessary to licence the building for entertainment. Includes information on Music copyright licensing; Premises license; Temporary Event Notices, and village cinema.

Alcohol in village halls (VHIS 10) – under review

If you want to make alcohol available in your hall, on a regular or occasional basis, this guide looks at the Licensing Act; Temporary Events Notices; Premises Licence; Charity Law and the regular sale of alcohol and other things to consider.

Village halls and social clubs (VHIS 27) – under review

This information sheet looks at the relationship between the village hall committee and the social club, the governance structures, and how the sale of alcohol is managed.

Bingo in village halls (VHIS 29) – Reviewed Jan 2011

There are a number of different criteria that need to be met in order for bingo to be played in village halls. This information sheet aims to explain these and provide examples.

Gaming and lotteries (VHIS 33) – Reviewed Feb 2011

Information on: Lotteries; '200' clubs; Race nights; Casino nights; Taxes; and Alcohol in raffles and as prizes. Includes an example Constitution for a '200' club.

'Would you be Ready? Guide for Small Businesses - Business in the Community

Quick guide and checklist from 'Business in the Community (BITC) for small businesses to create their own bespoke emergency plans. Eight practical steps to be ready for disruptive events, such as flood, cyber attack or civil unrest.

Available here: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/would-you-be-ready-guide-for-small-businesses/>

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