



Report

Village Halls in England

Summary Report of the 1988
Ronseal Village Halls Survey



1991

ACRE is not just another countryside organisation. Our concern is for the people in rural England.

ACRE is a charity taking action on jobs, housing, transport, shops and other services in rural areas. As the National Association of England's 38 county Rural Community Councils, we work at local and national levels, providing information, advice, training and action to improve the quality of life of all those living and working in our countryside.

Rural Community Councils (RCCs) are county-level charities working to promote the welfare of rural communities by encouraging community self-help, local initiatives and voluntary effort. Working in partnership with other organisations, they offer advice and practical help to village hall committees, parish councils and many other groups and individuals.

Among its many roles, ACRE provides the National Village Halls Advisory Service and the secretariat of the Village Halls Forum, which is the national organisation representing village halls.

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researched by Louise Beaton for ACRE

Summary written by Sheila Rowley

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Cover: Hunsdon Village Hall, Hertfordshire: one of almost 3,000 halls that took part in the survey.

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A SUMMARY OF THE RONSEAL VILLAGE HALLS SURVEY

The Ronseal Village Halls Survey was carried out in 1988. It proved to be a very popular and useful publication and interest in it has continued.

The Survey raised awareness of village Halls, drew attention to their importance in community life and highlighted the problems experienced in maintaining and managing them. It has been a useful tool in the continuing fight for more favourable treatment of village halls by statutory authorities

The Survey is now out of print, but copies are held by libraries, Rural Community Councils, etc. A summary of the information about each county is also held by the relevant Rural Community Council.

Rather than reprint the original edition of the Survey, it was decided that a summary would be of wider value in the future. The Summary contains the main survey findings, the conclusions and resulting recommendations. It is hoped that it will be as useful and relevant as the full survey it represents.

I would like to thank Marian Clubb for the long hours she has spent in preparing this Summary for publication.

Sheila Rowley
Assistant Village Halls Adviser
ACRE
1991

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INTRODUCTION

THE SURVEY

Village halls are the 'heart' of rural life, though largely a product of the twentieth century. In these days when rural shops, schools, bus services, pubs and churches are closing, the one facility that most villages have kept is their village hall.

Village Halls represent the major form of indoor community facilities in rural areas, fulfilling the same role as community centres in towns and cities. They are the village sports centre, health centre, leisure centre and social centre all rolled into one.

Along with the church and the school the village hall has played a key role in the educational and social development of rural England that has taken place since the latter half of the nineteenth century. The history of many is part and parcel of the history of the village and the buildings themselves often form an important part of the local heritage.

Numbers are on the increase because, as society changed, leisure time increased and other rural services declined, village halls responded by adapting to a new range of uses. They are prime examples of self-help, epitomising the best qualities of rural life - community spirit, co-operation and self determination of community needs - but can be helped by local authorities and government to make the best use of resources.

As a network they represent an immense charitable resource and the never-ending work of the 90,000 or so volunteers who run them deserves better appreciation.

In 1987 the new charity ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) took over provision of the National Village Halls Advisory Service from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, which had started the Service in the 1920s. One of ACRE's first tasks, through its Village Halls Forum, was to carry out a survey not only of village halls in England, but also of similar rural community facilities.

The result is a snapshot of 2,821 village halls and similar community halls in rural England in 1988: a record of how they are managed, used and funded, of the type of buildings, their age and accommodation, their problems, hopes and potential. The research has revealed that there are about 8,500 village and similar halls in England and marks the start of a database about them. The conclusions and recommendations show that community provision in rural England is heavily dependent upon the work that volunteers carry out and how, with the right kind of help, village halls can continue to best serve the needs of rural communities into the next century.

Carrying out this survey was a major exercise for a new charity and was only possible due to generous sponsorship from Ronseal,* the leading branch of wood care products, to whom we are extremely grateful for meeting the costs of printing, computer analysis and other overheads.

We should also like to thank:

- * The Rural Development Commission, which funds the National and County Village Halls Advisory Services and which met the cost of issuing Freepost envelopes,
- * The Rural Community Councils, which provide the local advisory services for mailing the survey forms,
- * Sussex Rural Community Council and, in particular, Peter Martin the Project Officer for undertaking the mammoth task of putting the responses onto computer and analysing them,
- * Bedfordshire Rural Community Council, for the use of its word processing facilities,
- * Hertfordshire County Council for preparing the graphics,
- * and most important of all, almost 3,000 volunteers who took the time and trouble to complete and return the survey forms and upon whose help the exercise relied.

Louise Beaton
Village Halls Adviser, ACRE

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Several of the recommendations have been instrumental in achieving action and this is noted in italics after the recommendation.

1.2 The Response

Survey forms were distributed to 8,178 of the estimated 8,500 community halls in rural England and almost 3,000 forms were returned, a response rate of 36%. 75% of the respondents were village hall charities. The remainder included parish council run halls, church halls, Women's Institute halls, joint provision schemes, youth clubs and churches.

1.3 The Building

Over half the halls surveyed are over 50 years old. Many are converted buildings such as barns, RAF/army huts and schools and one is a converted sewage works. Whilst some of the older halls have particular charm and 6% are listed buildings the older buildings tend to be in greater need of repair or attention than newer ones. 30% of the halls surveyed have walls in need of repair or attention, 34% have inadequate facilities and 60% inadequate storage. There is considerable scope for the improvement, extension and alteration of halls to develop new activities and 14% need essential amenities (toilets, kitchen, heating) to be modernised. New activities and population growth also create the need to improve and extend existing halls.

Although 48% of the halls surveyed have access for the disabled only 17% have toilets with wheelchair access. Over 60% have a main hall capable of holding less than 150 people for dancing.

Rec 1: In order to minimise running costs and reduce future grant-aid requirements new halls and extensions should be built of materials with low maintenance requirements.

Rec 2: In order to make the best use of existing resources, village hall committees should be encouraged to modernise and adapt their halls to meet the needs of today.

Rec 3: The Department of the Environment, the House-Builders Federation and local authorities address the need for financial assistance to improve or upgrade community facilities in areas of population growth, and particularly fragmented growth, including an investigation of the potential for contributions to made by developers. Where a local plan is drawn up for an area, provision should be made for adequate community facilities.

Rec 4: As facilities for public use, all village halls should be accessible to people with disabilities and have at least one toilet capable of use by those in wheelchairs or otherwise disabled.

Rec 5: Local authorities, companies, appropriate grant-making trusts and charities encourage and assist village hall committees to make provision for the disabled people by making funds available towards carrying out appropriate work.

Rec 6: The Home Office should increase from 165 sq.m. to 200 sq.m., the size of hall covered by the special section for small premises in the forthcoming *Guide to Fire Precautions in Places of Public Entertainment and Like Premises*, in order that more village halls are included.

** This has been accepted by the Home Office.*

1.4 Management

83% of the halls surveyed are registered charities and 97% run by voluntary management committees. However, a large proportion, 53%, have difficulty finding people to serve on the management committee. The work of voluntary village hall committees is largely unrecognised and it deserves greater appreciation and encouragement by the public, councillors, M.P.s and local government officers alike. Only a small percentage, 9%, have a regular bar to help raise income.

Rec 7: The committees of voluntary-run village halls should check whether they are, or should be, registered with the Charity Commission and, if not, they should apply for registration. RCCs should continue to draw the attention of village hall management committees to their obligation to register.

Rec 8: Village hall committees should consider the advantages of appointing as holding trustee the local parish council or the Official Custodian for Charities. RCCs, ACRE, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Charity Commission should continue to emphasise to village hall committees the merits of these forms of trustee.

Rec 9: The services of the Official Custodian for Charities as trustee for charity property should remain in being.

** This has been accepted by the Charity Commission.*

Rec 10: The public, and especially those moving into rural areas, need a better understanding of the important role that village halls play in rural life and should be encouraged to give voluntary management committees more help and support, for example with maintenance, fundraising and organising new activities. ACRE, RCCs, local authorities and village hall committees should make further efforts to develop this understanding.

Rec 11: In order to provide appropriate support for village halls, councillors, M.P.s and local government officers should have a proper understanding of their role, their funding and management.

Local authorities and statutory bodies should actively support village hall committees, for example, by publicly acknowledging their contribution to leisure provision; by appropriate funding; seeking ways of using them for statutory services, funding and co-operating with R.C.C. village hall advisory services and by making technical services available in an advisory capacity.

Rec 12: The Government, through the Rural Development Commission, should continue to support village halls by funding the national and county village hall advisory services.

Rec 13: The Government and all local and statutory authorities should avoid placing additional administrative requirements and costs on village halls. For example, licensing requirements should be streamlined and made appropriate to premises run by volunteers.

Rec 14: As licensing authorities, district councils should assist village halls to obtain Public Entertainment Licences by:

- a) providing financial help to carry out work needed in order to obtain a licence and
- b) giving committees sufficient time to raise funds for such work without withholding a licence.

1.5 Finance - Revenue

Less than half the halls surveyed, 44%, meet their running costs from hire charges, which are the main form of income for most halls. Those committees with older halls and buildings in poor repair tend to be less able to cover costs but village halls are charities, not businesses, and some choose to maximise use by fundraising in order to keep charges down.

Parish councils are the principal sources of local authority assistance towards running costs and maintenance. 27% of halls receive regular help from their parish council and this makes an extremely important contribution towards maintaining some halls.

In any year, between 60% and 70% of halls are raising funds. The total amount raised per annum is between £5 million and £8 million. The provision and management of village halls is dependent upon an enormous quantity of self-help which makes village halls very economical to run. Only half the district councils grant full rate relief to village halls and, if more would do so, this could help more halls to make ends meet.

Rec 15: Village hall committees should regularly review their hire charges and, as far as possible, budget to build up a repairs and maintenance fund.

Rec 16: As the most "local" tier of local authority parish councils are best placed to provide regular financial support for village halls at levels appropriate to their individual needs and more should consider doing so if requested.

Rec 17: In view of the high dependence of village halls on fundraising and voluntary management the Government, local and statutory authorities, other organisations and businesses should help village hall committees by avoiding placing extra costs on them and by keeping existing costs to a minimum. In particular,

- a) The Government should find means to relieve committees of the cost of V.A.T. on building work, fuel and power when zero-rating is withdrawn in April 1989. In the longer term the Government should press the European Commission to permit derogations (zero-rates) for charities such as village halls.

** VAT on new building for charitable use was zero rated in an amendment to the 1989 Finance Bill. However, VAT at the standard rate remains on extensions and alterations and on fuel and power supplies for village halls.*

- b) District councils should use their discretion to waive waste disposal charges.
- c) The Performing Rights Society and statutory authorities should keep their charges to village halls to a minimum.

Rec 18: In view of the valuable service that village halls provide to rural communities and their difficulty in meeting overheads, all district councils should grant full 100% rate relief (i.e. 20% discretionary relief and 80% mandatory relief) to charitable village halls from 1990 onwards, with the possible exception of those halls running regular bars.

1.6 Capital Work and Finance

Village halls in England form a vast resource, with capital assets in buildings alone worth some £660 million. The mean valuation of £75,000 and the fact that nearly one third are valued at over £100,000 give an indication of the current costs of provision of new halls. However, up to 35% could be without an index-linked insurance policy.

Local authorities are the principal source of capital grant-aid for improvement and replacement of village halls and such grants have played a great part in maintaining the stock of village halls and improving their use, particularly over the last seven years since the Department of Science ceased to provide grants for village halls. The availability of grant-aid varies widely across the country, however, and some authorities make no provision at all. Most counties have adopted a partnership system, with county and district council contributions dependent upon a minimum contribution from the local community. The RCC normally acts as adviser and co-ordinator. The Sports Council and the Rural Development Commission have also made important contributions to developing the use of village halls through special capital grant schemes, which supplement local authority provision.

64% of the halls surveyed are planning major improvements or repairs in the next five years, a level which indicates a high degree of forward planning. 48% envisage applying for a grant, and the full need for capital grants in the next two years could be as high as £30 million, compared with a known grant availability of about £5 million p.a.

Rec 19: All halls not on an index-linked insurance policy should review their sum insured for rebuilding at least annually. RCCs should check that those not index-linked nor recently adjusted have now reviewed their sum insured.

Rec 20: All local authorities should make sufficient capital grant-aid available to maintain a continuous programme of modernisation and improvement of village halls and community centres.

- * *Some local authorities have reviewed their capital grant aid schemes favourably for village halls.*

Rec 21: County and district councils should consult RCCs over the level of need for capital grants and their method and level of allocation.

Rec 22: Where a partnership system with standard policies has not yet been adopted the merits of so doing should be investigated by the local authorities in liaison with the RCC.

Rec 23: Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation should continue to provide funds to develop better use of halls for sport and also consider the value of assisting more halls of a smaller size as well as more older halls.

Rec 24: The Rural Development Commission should continue to provide funds to develop the use of village halls for rural service provision.

- * *The Rural Development Commission continues to provide funds to encourage widening the use of village halls in Rural Development Areas.*

Rec 25: Where circumstances necessitate the installation of a public telephone, British Telecom could make a reduction in installation costs for village halls, and parish councils, if necessary, could help meet maintenance costs.

- * *This has not been accepted by British Telecom.*

Rec 26: Village hall committees should continue to seek new ways of using their halls to benefit their local communities. Local authorities and other organisations (eg sports and arts associations) should consider whether they can make further use of village halls to provide services and activities in rural areas and consider making available pump-priming finance to help launch new activities.

THE AIMS AND METHODS

Aims

1.1 What are Village Halls?

Strictly speaking, village halls are independent recreational charities run for the benefit of the local community. Most are based upon model trust deeds prepared originally by The National Council for Voluntary Organisations. These place the hall's management in the hands of a committee which represents user organisations and elected members of the public.

In some places, a community hall may instead be provided by the parish or town council as part of its statutory function (eg a Town Hall). In addition, many church halls (which differ in that they are provided primarily for religious purposes), Women's Institute halls, youth centres, sports pavilions, scout huts and schools also accommodate a range of community activities.

1.2 Why carry out a survey of village halls in England?

The purpose of this survey was to gain a picture of the nature of provision of all such facilities. All those running premises which serve as community halls were therefore invited to join in the survey.

Although there has been a National Advisory Service for village halls since the 1920s, there was no complete record of how many there are, what state they are in, what activities they are used for or what their financial circumstances are. The very range of halls has produced a variety of images amongst the public and politicians alike, based on the few that each individual knows. It is hoped that this survey will put the record straight and make it easier to convey an accurate picture when talking with local authorities and Government about policies that affect village halls.

Village halls make an important contribution to community development, partly by providing a building where new activities can be launched and also because the

management committee is in regular communication with the local organisations represented on the committee. The survey gave us the opportunity to explore the potential for and the constraints on developing the use of halls, as well as to ask about problems and the level of community support.

In recent years RCCs have become computer equipped and several have carried out surveys of village halls, the aims and scope of which have varied. This survey was an opportunity to establish the foundations of a national database about community halls in rural areas.

The aims of the survey were, therefore:

- * To show the importance of village halls in rural community life
- * To establish the level of need for capital grant aid
- * To demonstrate the amount of voluntary effort that village halls attract
- * To establish current running and building costs
- * To enable RCCs to compile county directories with information for potential hirers, if so desired.

The Method

1.3 The Survey Form

The form was based on one devised some years previously and used for several RCC surveys. The final version is included in Appendix A. Inevitably, as with all questionnaires, a balance had to be struck between the detail required and the brevity needed so as not to deter volunteers from completing it.

1.4 Distribution

The forms were distributed with Freepost envelopes from January 1988 onwards. Most were sent by RCCs with their quarterly mailings to village halls but extensive national and local publicity arranged by Ronseal brought hundreds of enquiries.

36 RCCs participated and two did not, because they had recently completed their own survey. There was a response rate of 36% and 2,821 completed forms were returned and used in the survey.

1.5 Analysis

The analysis was carried out by the Sussex Rural Community Council, under the direction of Project Officer Peter Martin, using Apricot microcomputers and DataEase software.

The reports produced included:

- * A national summary, which forms the basis of this report,
- * a summary for each county,

In the discussion of the results, the survey author's experience and knowledge of village halls have been drawn upon and any errors are hers alone. Observations and comments, as well as responses to the recommendations, would be welcome.

1.6 Validation

The results of this survey were compared with ones already carried out in individual counties. It is felt that there is a reasonably good degree of correlation between the different results. Nevertheless, caution has been exercised in attempting to extrapolate the 1988 survey results to 8,500

halls.

Because the responses tended to come from halls who have good contact with RCCs, the results might be slightly biased towards those halls with active committees, those with problems who have used RCC services, or those that have sought grant aid for capital work.

1.7 Results

The results of each question are presented and discussed in the following chapters, in the order they were asked in the questionnaire, and the results of cross-tabulations and background information are included at appropriate points.

The return was as follows:

	Count	Percent
Forms distributed	8,178	
Forms returned	2,926	35.78
No Hall	105	3.59
Total completed	2,821	34.49
Parishes covered	2,791	

The distribution indicates that there are approximately 8,500 village halls and similar community halls in England. The distribution of returns between counties is listed at the end of this chapter.

Village Halls in England

RESPONSE, BY COUNTIES

Total returned: 2,926

Total completed: 2,821

	Distributed	Returned	Percentage	Completed
Avon	155	49	31	47
Bedfordshire	6	4	67	4
Berkshire	106	45	42	45
Buckinghamshire	200	70	35	69
Cambridgeshire	136	47	34	46
Cheshire	87	26	30	26
Cleveland	40	12	30	11
Cornwall	206	53	26	52
Cumbria	307	71	23	71
Derbyshire	198	114	57	112
Devon	409	136	33	135
Dorset	275	97	35	95
Durham	191	60	31	60
Essex	258	148	57	138
Gloucestershire	232	84	36	84
Hampshire	248	84	34	83
Hereford & Worcester	284	126	44	125
Hertfordshire	135	56	41	56
Humberside		1		
Isle of Wight	51	25	49	21
Kent	357	187	52	178
Lancashire	110	49	44	49
Leicestershire	196	59	30	59
Lincolnshire	371	149	40	120
Norfolk	474	101	21	99
Northamptonshire	199	81	41	81
Northumberland	170	56	33	56
Nottinghamshire	317	78	24	67
Oxfordshire	242	68	28	68
Shropshire	201	72	36	71
Somerset	306	81	26	80
Staffordshire	175	55	31	55
Suffolk	255	147	58	143
Surrey	100	35	35	35
Sussex-East and West	312	124	40	119
Warwickshire	144	44	31	44
Wiltshire	215	70	33	70
Yorkshire	510	162	32	146

THE BUILDINGS

Village Halls vary widely in construction and their accommodation similarly varies, though certain features are common.

Section B of the survey form asked questions about the age of construction, accommodation and condition of village halls.

3.1 Age of Hall

When was the present
hall originally built?

When built:

	%
up to 1850	7.23
1851-1914	21.02
1915-1929	18.33
1930-1939	8.76
1940-1945	1.17
1946-1959	9.85
1960-1969	6.77
1970-1979	8.83
Since 1979	7.76

"Over half were built
before the Second
World War. . . ."

These results show that almost half (46.5%) of the respondent halls were built before 1930. Over half (55%) were built before the second world war and are therefore fifty years old or more. Nearly a third (28%) were built before the first world war.

It is evident that age is likely to be a major contributory factor to the need for repair, improvement or replacement of halls, and therefore for grant aid.

3.2 A brief history of village halls

The precursor of the 'village hall' seems to have been the church or parish room and, from the middle of the nineteenth century, the village school. The majority of older halls are likely to have been converted from these buildings, and later from barns and cottages with philanthropic landowners beginning to provide purpose-built halls towards the end of the century.

Three factors contributing to the surge of village hall building after World War I were: a national drive to develop education and social provision in rural areas; the availability of many former RAF and Army huts; and the desire of local people to provide a memorial to those who had lost their lives in the War. Many halls built in the last twenty years have replaced these huts from World War I. Between 1920 and 1939 the National Council for Social Service and gradually emerging RCCs encouraged the building of halls, and a major influence was the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust which pioneered grants for this work.

During the last thirty years the rate of provision of village halls has increased. In 1955 the Ministry of Education commenced a regular grant aid programme, and in 1981 responsibility for it was transferred from the Department of Education and Science to local authorities. Since then the provision of new halls to replace older buildings and to meet the population's growing leisure and sporting needs has continued, despite a tremendous escalation in building costs, higher building regulation standards, and massive cuts in local authority grant budgets in some counties. Provision was assisted for a number of years by Manpower Service Commission community programme schemes.

What was the hall
originally built as?

	%
Village Hall/ Community Centre	61.46
School/Sunday School	13.93
Church Hall	5.35
Barn/Cow Shed	1.8
Reading Room	5.17
Miners Welfare Institute	0.92
RAF/Army Hut	4.47
Other	13.04

"Many older halls
have been converted
from buildings now
redundant for their
original purpose."

"The cost of upkeep
has forced many
organisations to give
up their halls in
favour of joining
forces with a village
hall committee."

Is there a car park?

Yes	75.15%
-----	--------

How is the property
bordered?

Border	%
Fence	51.44
Wall	32.40
Hedge	47.15
Other	18.82

3.3 Original Use

It is evident that the age of many older halls is indeed accounted for by the fact that they have been converted from buildings now redundant for their original purpose

Although over 60% of respondent halls were purpose-built, 44.68% were built for some other purpose and either serve as the meeting place for a variety of social activities (principally schools and church halls) or have been converted into village halls.

The cost of upkeep has forced many WIs - and indeed other organisations - to give up their halls in favour of joining forces with a village hall committee. Similarly, while the closure of village schools, churches and chapels has been a blow to many communities it has often presented an opportunity to provide a village hall. The nature of community meeting places has thereby gradually changed.

3.4 Car Parks

Car parks of sufficient size are a requirement of planning permission for new halls. The cost of providing a car park can be built into grant applications for new halls and improvements, but provision comes low down the list of priorities in most county grant schemes. Lack of car parking can cause traffic congestion and restrict use for large events.

3.5 Property Border

The boundary of the hall's property is another area that may require maintenance.

PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION

Questions were asked to provide an overall picture of the nature of construction of village halls and their physical condition, with a view to providing some indication of the numbers of halls requiring major repair or improvement and therefore likely levels of demand for grant aid.

Are any of the external walls built of...?

External Walls	%
Brick	62.99
Cement Block	12.41
Corrugated Iron	5.03
Wood	18.89
Stone	19.56
Other	6.06

What is the main roof made of?

Main roof	%
Slate	24.17
Tile	42.08
Metal	8.50
Asbestos	16.44
Thatch	0.60
Other	14.67

Has the hall a flat roof?

Yes	53.78%
-----	--------

Is the hall a listed building?

Yes	6.63%
-----	-------

Special architectural features -

14.71 halls responded

3.6 Walls

The principal other building materials quoted are asbestos (34 halls) and concrete (29 halls - at least 12 being pre-cast concrete panels). A further 10 were also of pre-fabricated construction.

3.7 Roof

The principal 'other' roofing materials quoted were roofing felt and corrugated iron.

Flat roofs tend to have higher maintenance requirements than pitched roofs with traditional materials, but they are commonly provided for reasons of economy and particularly on small extensions (eg kitchen and toilet blocks).

3.8 Listed Buildings

Listed buildings used for charitable village hall purposes enjoy the advantage of relief from VAT on approved building alterations. However, adapting them to modern requirements can be difficult and costly. Building conservation grants as well as ordinary local authority grants can therefore make an important contribution to the upkeep of such halls.

3.9 Architectural features

If your hall has any special architectural features, please describe them here

Although only a small proportion of halls are listed as being of architectural or historic merit, a good deal more have features of note. The answers reveal an intriguing variety of features reflecting local building styles, materials and history which would of themselves make an interesting study. Local authority Building Conservation Officers are probably in the best position to give detailed advice about maintenance as well as advice about sources of financial assistance if needed.

The most common feature recorded was open ceilings with exposed beams and sometimes wood linings. Other features were bell and clock towers, leaded lights and arched windows. Wall paintings, cupolas and timber frames were amongst special aspects of buildings, some of which are clearly very old.

INTERNAL DETAILS

3.10 Internal Cladding

37.75% of halls have internal walls clad in some form of wood.

3.11 Heating

What is the main type of heating system?

Heating	%
Electric Con- vection/fan	22.60
Electric radiant	32.22
Gas, mains	26.19
Gas, bottle	10.14
Oil	17.05
Combination of 2 above or more	7.44
Other	5.88

Adequate heating is crucial if a hall is to be used to its full potential, particularly for activities for elderly people or the very young.

The main forms of heating are listed in the table: others include electric storage heaters and solid fuel appliances.

58% of halls use electricity for heating and 36% use gas.

Note: Since 1 July 1990, subject to certain conditions, VAT is payable on fuel and power supplies to village halls. Halls whose business use is more than 40% and which use more than a stated minimum amount of electricity or piped gas, pay VAT on the proportion used for their business activities. Halls using oil or bottled gas can avoid paying VAT by buying or storing less than the stated minimum amount at any one time.

3.12 Electric Slot Meters

18.33% of the halls surveyed have electric heating which is paid for through slot meters.

Is the floor of main hall mostly. . .?

Type:	%
Wood strips/ boards	66.43
Wood block	21.05
Wood mosaic	1.63
Vinyl	8.01
Granwood	2.45
Other	5.38

3.13 Main Hall Floor

The principal forms of 'other flooring' were concrete, chipboard, carpet, hardboard and linoleum. The popularity of wood for flooring the main hall - over 90% of respondents had some form of wood floor - is not misplaced. Its combination of durability, warmth and, if sprung, suitability for sports and dancing, make it the best option for most halls.

What type of stage?

Type of stage	%
Permanent	52.22
Moveable	19.78
None	27.51

3.13 Stage

The lack of a stage should not in itself be a deterrent to using a hall for drama or other performance activities and, in fact, a small stage can be more restricting than none at all. Modern systems are available which fold away into a small space and locally made staging blocks are also popular.

3.15 Accommodation

Does the building have the following?

Accommodation	%
Main hall	98.51
Small hall	20.31
Committee room	49.59
Kitchen	97.87
Entrance hall	70.76
Separate bar/lounge	14.11
Changing rooms	16.27
Showers	7.66
Indoor toilets for both sexes	94.40
Toilets for the disabled	16.70
Store room	61.32
Coffee bar/servery	29.45
Skittle alley	2.23
62 Wheel chair access	48.00
Other	11.30

The range of accommodation that village halls offer - and could offer - is not widely appreciated and details will form useful local reference material for potential hirers. However, whilst some halls have a range of accommodation, others clearly do not - the typical village hall has simply a main hall, a kitchen and toilets usually with an entrance hall and store room and perhaps a committee room, and access for the disabled. Whilst a wide range of activities takes place in village halls, the answers indicate that there is potential for the development of further community activities in many areas given improvement and/or expansion of their village halls.

Is there provision for disabled people?

	%
Wheel Chair Access	48.00
Suitable toilets	16.70

3.16 Provision for disabled people

While 48% of respondents have wheelchair access, only 16.7% provide toilets for the disabled and this anomaly does merit attention. Building regulations now require the provision of a toilet for the disabled and many of the halls while such facilities will therefore be new ones.

Committees should be encouraged to make provision for disabled people wherever possible in improvement schemes, and the availability of pump-priming funds from government or local authorities would encourage committees to do so. Assisting such provision may also be attractive to companies, community service organisations and grant-making trusts.

3.17 Storage Space

Is the hall's storage space inadequate?

Yes	59.98%
-----	--------

Almost 60% of halls have inadequate storage space, confirming that it is a common problem. There are likely to be two reasons for this: firstly because some of the activities which have become more widespread in recent years have high storage requirements; secondly, because storage tends to be one of the first items to be cut if finance proves insufficient to provide all desired facilities in a new hall. The result can actually reduce use of the hall.

Finance for improved storage is, like car parks, usually lower down the priority list for local authority grant aid but there is clearly a need for better storage at village halls. As the costs involved are less than those required for rebuilding/renovation work, it would be appropriate for parish and district councils to take prime responsibility for assisting provision of storage.

3.18 Other Inadequate Facilities

Are any of the hall's
facilities inadequate
for their purpose
(except storage)?

Yes 33.85%

Facilities listed included kitchen, toilets, heating, main hall, stage, parking, committee room or lack of it, changing rooms and showers or lack of them, cloakrooms and toilets accessible to people in wheelchairs.

A wide variety of other inadequacies were quoted and eighteen halls said that the hall was generally inadequate to meet rising demand or to meet the needs of a village that had grown - a point which may well be reflected in other answers given above. Inadequate toilets, kitchens and heating reflect in part the fact that, as domestic provision has improved, people have come to expect higher standards of provision. However, Environmental Health Officers are also increasingly insisting that kitchens and toilets be upgraded. Analysis of the date of construction shows that halls built since 1946, and particularly since 1979, are less likely to have inadequate facilities.

"The result is that, in some areas, new communities are created with no community facilities."

It seems that up to a third of the halls surveyed could make a greater contribution to the development of community activities, if inadequacies in the building could be dealt with. Where population growth has, or is likely to, put pressure on existing facilities, developers and local authorities can be expected to contribute to the upgrading of the local infrastructure. However, the need to up-grade community facilities is commonly overlooked except where 'new villages' or other large scale development takes place. The result is that, in some areas, new communities are created with no community facilities.

The provision of community facilities in areas of population growth is a subject that needs to be addressed both by the Department of the Environment (who issue planning policy guidance notes), by local planning and grant-aiding authorities (whose rate income rises with growth), and by house builders.

What is the seating capacity of the main hall (without tables)?

	%
a) up to 50	3.76
b) 51-100	35.87
c) 101-150	28.89
d) 151-200	18.57
e) 201-250	5.99
f) Over 250	4.64

What is the dancing capacity of the main hall?

	%
a) up to 50	7.87
b) 51-100	34.28
c) 101-150	23.86
d) 151-200	13.01
e) 201-250	3.76
f) Over 250	2.62

What is the approximate size of the main hall ?
(in sq.m)

	%
a) Up to 100m ²	24.74
b) 101-200m ²	36.33
c) 201-300m ²	6.13
d) 301-400m ²	1.99
e) Over 400m ²	5.71

Do any of the external walls need repair/attention?

	%
Brick	25.92
Cement Block	27.43
Corrugated Iron	52.82
Wood	52.32
Stone	26.52
Other	40.98

"Over 30% of halls have external walls needing repair."

3.19 Capacity and Size

Questions sought information about the capacity and area of the main hall, for two purposes. The first is for local reference for potential hirers and the second because capacity has a direct bearing on the cost of licensing premises for public entertainments and public performance of copyright music.

Capacity figures for seated events and those with dancing are given by fire officers as part of the conditions of a Public Entertainments Licence. The dancing capacity of their hall should therefore be known to committee members, yet 15% of the respondents failed to respond. This may partly be accounted for by the fact that only 78% of respondents are known to hold a Public Entertainments Licence.

3.20 Condition, repairs and maintenance

The condition of the fabric of many village halls and the need for major repairs gives cause for concern.

Over 30% of halls have external walls in need of repair or attention and this is high enough to merit further examination. On average, 40% of respondents reported walls in poor condition, which either means that up to 10%, while in poor condition, are not considered bad enough yet to warrant repair attention or that some of this 10% are built of several materials. When the halls with poor walls are cross-tabulated with date built, the results show that the pre-1945 halls, and particularly those built from 1915-29 and 1940-45, have poorer walls. Condition then improves steadily with age amongst halls built from 1946 to the present day.

Fortunately 82% of the respondents have some brick or stone walls, since double the proportion of the halls with less substantial materials - corrugated iron and wood - need repair or attention.

66% of halls with walls in need of repair/attention envisage applying for a grant.

Is the condition of
the main roof poor?

	%
Slate	9.69
Tiles	6.23
Metal	17.87
Asbestos	13.74
Thatch	17.65
Flat	14.00
Other	14.35

"11% of all halls
reported main roofs in
poor condition."

3.21 Main Roof Condition

11% of halls reported that their main roof was in poor condition. Study of the date built shows that halls built before 1914 and between 1940 and 1945 are more likely to have a poor roof. As with walls, condition improves steadily with age amongst halls built since 1946 to the present day.

The proportion of halls with roofs in poor condition is twice as high among the less durable materials - metal, thatch and asbestos.

Dilapidation Index

Index	% Halls
0	24
1	37
2	25
3	11
4	3

"A policy of helping
communities to
provide buildings with
longer life and
needing less
maintenance should be
the goal of every
authority."

3.22 Dilapidation Index

Results about the poor condition of walls and roofs and about inadequate storage and other facilities were cross tabulated to give a Dilapidation Index for each hall from 0 to, at worst, 4. Over a third of halls scored 2 or more.

Age has a significant bearing on a hall's condition and it is apparent that there are a large number of halls over 50 years old, many of which are now in need of renovation, modernisation or rebuilding. This legacy of old buildings and especially less substantial ones, coupled with modern hygiene standards and new demands on village halls, accounts for the current pressure on grant budgets. Management Committees should also consider the long term benefits of planning a comprehensive programme of improvements beyond immediately needed repairs. The initiative to improve the condition of halls, needs to come from each village in order that work is tailored to local needs, and there is no reason why local communities should not continue to be expected to raise a proportion of the cost of such work, as they have always done. However, outside help is necessary and we have both highlighted areas needing attention (eg provision of storage and provision for disabled people) and suggested sources from which there is scope for further finance to be made available.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Is the hall a
registered charity?

Yes 83.27%

"Registration does
bring benefits as well
as obligations. . . ."

4.1 Charitable Status

Work by the Community Council for Wiltshire indicated that in April 1988 3,671 village halls were registered as charities with the Charities Commission.

It is likely that some of the respondents who are not registered charities are either parish council-run halls, local authority-run day centres or youth centres. Others may simply have overlooked their obligation to register.

Registration does bring benefits as well as obligations, the most important of which include protection for the assets of the charity, entitlement to discretionary and mandatory rate relief and tax relief investments.

The results indicate that up to three-quarters of the responding halls are based upon one of the model trust deeds for village halls or community associations.

4.2 Holding Trustees

Are the holding
trustees...?

%

Official
Custodian for
Charities 21.33

Parish council 22.58

Individual
trustees 29.59

A Church
Authority 4.75

Other 7.30

Long standing national policy encourages the use of either the parish council or the Official Custodian for Charities as holding or custodian trustees. The advantages are that, unlike individual trustees, they never need replacing and can always be found at a known address. The Official Custodian has one further advantage: as an officer of the Charity Commission he is too far removed to participate in everyday matters but will give advice and will act in the correct manner when required to do so.

Analysis of the 'other' category indicates some degree of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about the trusteeship of halls as 117 replied that the village hall management committee were the holding trustees. The village hall committee are the managing (or charity) trustees of the charity but, since the committee is an unincorporated association, holding (or custodian) trustees are appointed as the legal owners of the property.

Is there a
management
committee?

Yes 97.09%

What is the
composition of the
management
committee?

	%
Reps of user organisations	75.33
Elected members of the public	68.94
Co-opted	43.35
Parish Council sub-committee	10.71
Other	9.92

Is it difficult to get
people to serve on
the committee?

Yes 53.49%

Do the premises have
a Public
Entertainment
Licence?

Yes 77.84%

"The upgrading of halls to licence standards is likely to be a source of pressure on local fundraising and on local authority budgets for some time to come."

4.3 Management Committee

The majority of village halls are run by volunteers. The church (vicar, churchwardens or PCC) and parish council emerge as the principal 'other' organisations involved in village hall management. 53 halls appear likely to be owned and run by the church and 23 by the WI.

Over half of the respondents report that it was difficult to get people to serve on the committee. Much of the work required is basic administration or routine maintenance. It is not exciting or glamorous but it has to be done and it often goes unappreciated by the majority. This does not mean that all these halls are in jeopardy. Many halls go through the doldrums as personalities and activities come and go and most committees carry on regardless. The result, however, is that often the same people run a committee for many years whereas most would benefit from 'fresh blood' and new ideas from time to time. There are ways and means to improve the situation. Some are highlighted in ACRE's publication '*Managing your Hall*' and RCCs can also provide advice to individual halls.

4.4 Public Entertainment Licence

Public Entertainment Licences are the main form of licences that village halls need to obtain; they are required for all public entertainments involving music, singing, dancing and exhibitions of sport. For most halls an annual licence, for which no fee is payable, is appropriate.

Lack of a Public Entertainment Licence may be because no public entertainments are held on the premises or because the premises do not come up to the required local fire safety or sanitary standards. District Councils are the licencing and inspecting authorities.

In the 7 years since the legislation has been in force there has been an increase in standards. If a hall cannot obtain a licence, this is a major constraint on its fundraising ability. The upgrading of halls to licence standards is likely to be a source of pressure on local fundraising and on local authority budgets for some time to come. These points should be borne in mind by local authorities, both when setting budgets and setting new standards.

Do the premises
have...?

	%
A full justices' on-licence for the regular sale of alcohol	3.47

A social club with on-licence or registration certificate for the sale of alcohol	5.81
--	------

"The regular sale of
alcohol can be
tempting as a means
of fundraising,
however,"

4.5 Alcohol Licences

Alcohol is a popular accompaniment to many village events and selling alcohol can be a useful means of fundraising. In order to do so most village halls obtain occasional permissions (licences), of which each voluntary organisation can obtain up to 4 in any twelve month period, or use the services of a publican with a justices' on-licence. Such methods avoid infringing the hall's charitable status or incurring taxation on the proceeds of sale.

The regular sale of alcohol can be tempting as a means of fundraising. However, it can result in unwelcome competition with local pubs, security problems and the loss of discretionary rate relief. A full justices' on-licence can endanger charitable status, and the transfer of the bar to a social club should be investigated with the help of the RCC.

4.6 Property Type

Is the property

(1) Freehold?

(2) Leasehold?

Type	%
Freehold	80.15
Leasehold	15.63

Halls with freehold property are obviously in a more secure position than those with leasehold. However, a good many halls occupying leasehold land have a local authority as landlord and they usually take a favourable attitude to renewal and to granting leases at peppercorn or low rents in order to secure the provision of a community facility.

Chapter 5

FINANCE

What have been your running costs, including maintenance but excluding major repairs?

1986/87	
Costs £	%
Up to 1000	28.50
1001 -2000	21.20
2001 -3000	12.48
3001 -4000	7.09
4001 -5000	5.03
5001 -6000	3.08
6001-10000	5.00
over 10000	2.16

Total response 84.54

"Almost half of the respondent halls have annual running costs below £2,000 pa and 75% have annual running costs below £5,000 pa."

What proportion of running costs do hire charge cover?

Proportion of costs covered:	
	%
Up to 20%	3.65
21 -50%	13.36
51 -75%	15.28
76-100%	12.48
over 100%	44.17

"Only 44% of respondent halls cover their running costs from hire charges."

5.1 Running Costs

The question about running costs was asked for each of the previous three years, but only the figures for 1986/7 are given here. The figures show that almost half of the respondent halls have annual running costs below £2,000 p.a. and that 75% have costs below £5,000 p.a.

Cross-tabulation with other questions showed that halls with full justices' on-licences and social clubs were more likely to have running costs above £4,000 than other halls.

It may well be that the size of the halls lies behind the cost differences, larger halls having higher running costs. Low running costs would not necessarily be regarded as an advantage, as they may imply that the hall is poorly used.

5.2 Hire Charges

That only 44% of respondent halls cover their running costs from hire charges demonstrates clearly that community life in rural areas is dependent upon the willingness of village hall committees to raise money to keep halls in good order. Cross tabulations showed that factors which may contribute to hire charges not covering running costs include high maintenance or running costs coupled with relative poor use, owing to the nature and condition of the building. A small proportion have another source of income such as sales of alcohol. Halls not covering running costs from hire charges tend to rely more on volunteers to carry out major repairs.

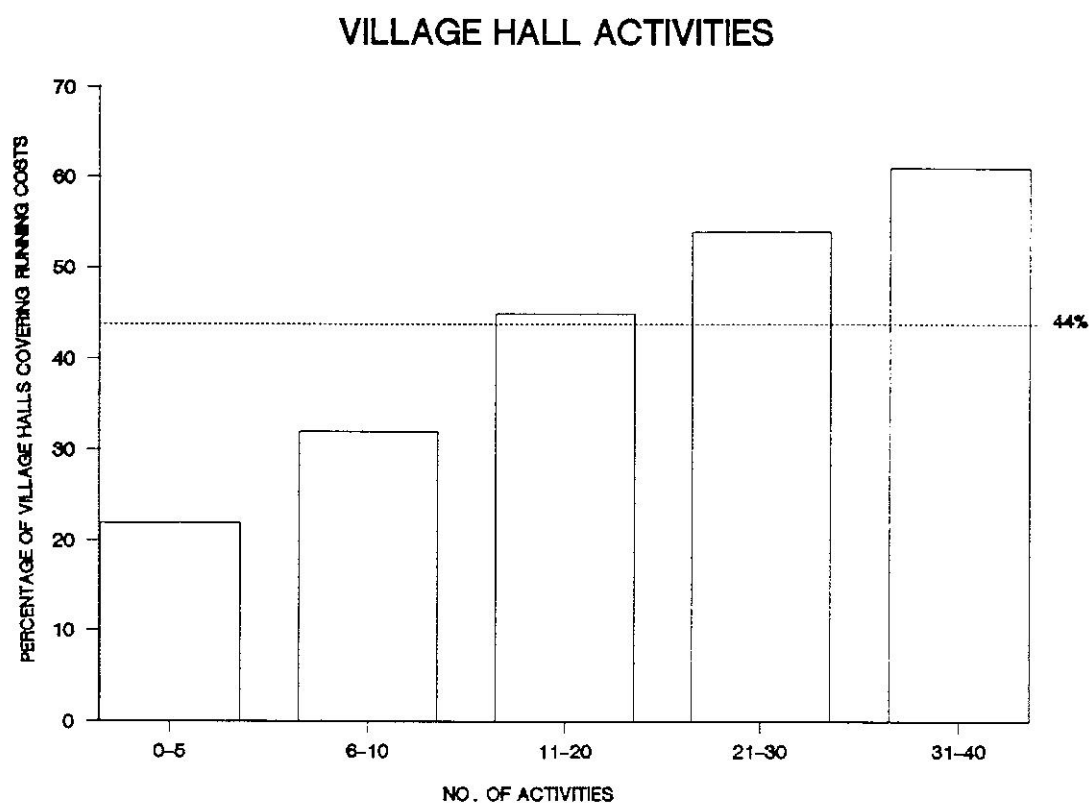
Halls covering their costs were more likely to have been built since 1970, particularly since 1979, and to have been purpose built or converted from barns.

"It is important that halls keep the level of charges under review and raise them with inflation."

The extent to which a management committee plans to cover running costs from hire charges is of course a matter for it to decide. Village halls are charities, not businesses, and many committees choose to fundraise in order to keep hire charges down and encourage use of the hall. Achieving the right level of charge is a matter of balancing costs against ensuring that the hall is used. Having representatives of all organisations on the committee is an asset in this respect, since all bear responsibility for the financial viability of the hall. It is important that halls keep the level of charges under review and raise them with inflation.

Village Hall Activities

The graph below shows that ability to cover running costs rises with the number of activities.



Do you receive regular financial support towards your running costs?

Source of support %

a) Parish Council	27.5
b) District Council	4.75
c) Other	10.00
	42.25

Total receiving regular LA assistance: 34.85

"A small amount of regular funding from the Parish Council can help."

". . .the Government needs to find means of relieving village halls from the effects of VAT. . . ."

Do you receive rate relief?

Rate Relief	Count	%
Yes		81.04
Level:		
50%		22.12
75%		6.56
100%		48.74
other		1.31
Up to 50%		0.39
51-75%		0.28
76-100%		0.67

". . . . it is vital that district councils use their powers to offer 100% rate relief."

5.3 Regular Financial Support

42.25% of respondent halls receive some regular financial support. A small amount of regular funding from the parish council can help the committee to cope not only with maintenance but with larger repairs and small improvements. As we have seen, a hall that is in better repair is more able to cover its running costs. Parish council help can therefore arrest the vicious circle of decline.

The government, local and statutory authorities and other organisations can help committees by not placing extra costs on village halls and keeping existing charges to a minimum level. For example, local authorities can now use their discretion not to charge for refuse disposal and to give 100% rate relief and the Performing Right Society should keep its charges for copyright music to a minimum.

Most importantly however, the Government needs to find means of relieving village halls from the effects of VAT on alterations, extensions and repairs and fuel and power.

5.4 Rate Relief

One of the principal fiscal advantages which charitable status brings to village halls is eligibility for mandatory rate relief (which has risen from 50% to 80% with the introduction of the Uniform Business Rate in 1990).

The results reveal that most district councils have set a policy towards granting rate relief for village halls but also that, within the same county, those policies can differ widely.

April 1990.

Village Halls now pay the Uniform Business Rate and they have been revalued as a basis for this. Charitable village halls and community centres are eligible for 80% mandatory rate relief and a further 20% discretionary relief. Many of the revaluations are considerably higher than the previous values and it is vital not only that the mandatory relief level of 80% is maintained at least at this value, but that district councils use their powers to offer 100% rate relief.

How much was raised
by voluntary
fundraising last year?

1986/87	
Raised £	%
Less than 501	26.94
501 -1000	19.60
1001-2000	15.03
2001-3000	4.54
3001-4000	1.95
Over 4000	3.01

Total response 71%

"Village communities are making a very substantial contribution towards maintaining community facilities in financial terms, as well as time".

Are the following jobs
usually carried out by
volunteers?

	%
Small repairs/ routine maint.	78.45
Redecorating (internal)	44.74
All maint. work excluding specialist tasks	29.88
Major repairs and improve- ments	4.08

For what approximate
sum is your hall
insured for total
rebuilding?

Rebuilding insurance £	%
Up to 25,000	8.29
25,001-50,000	17.05
51,001-75,000	15.70
75,001-100,000	15.28
100,001-125,000	8.61
125,001-150,000	6.31
150,001-200,000	6.03
over 200,000	7.48

Is your rebuilding
insurance index
linked?

Yes - 64.87%

5.5 Voluntary Fundraising

Apart from local authority grants, the other principal sources of regular support were fundraising, a village fete, fair or show, parochial charities, lotteries, investments/trust funds, and rent of part of the hall. A number reflect the fact that the premises are run principally for another purpose (eg Scouts, WI, Age Concern, Church Halls).

The total amount of fundraising carried out each year can only be guessed from these figures but ranges from £1.65 million pa to £2.7 million pa, indicating a possible national level of fundraising by village halls and similar rural community facilities between £5 and £8 million pa. Village communities are therefore making a very substantial contribution towards maintaining community facilities in financial terms, as well as in time.

5.6 Voluntary Work

These figures demonstrate that a huge number of halls are dependent on volunteers for maintenance and other work. If it were not for this degree of self-help, maintaining community life throughout rural Britain would be more dependent on revenue support from local authorities.

5.7 Rebuilding Insurance

The only capital assets of most village hall charities are their buildings and the land on which they stand (unless leasehold). It is vitally important that the building insurance is kept up to date. The high level (25%) of halls insured for no more than £50,000 is surprising and it would be advisable for these halls to check their rebuilding value.

Unless the insurance policy is index linked, allowance must be made annually for inflation, so that the sum for which the hall is insured accurately reflects the true cost of rebuilding it. Special insurance policies are available for village halls which offer index-linking and halls not index-linked would be well advised to consider them.

It is important that the correct base value is applied when a policy is index-linked and an Information Sheet is available from ACRE which gives a guide on current rebuilding costs.

Have you received grants towards improvements/extensions since 1981 from . . .?

Grant Sources	%
County Council	27.19
District Council	47.21
Parish Council	38.74
RDC	1.95
Sports Council	3.47
Other sources	11.31

Analysis of the 'other' sources reveals that the principal ones were:

Local/Regional
Charities
Rural Community
Councils
Companies
Local Authority
lottery funds
Manpower services
Commission

"...nine (county councils) made no provision for village halls."

"...a great many halls have benefitted from local authority grant aid over the last 7 years."

"County and District Council grants correlate with above average levels of activity in most of the halls receiving them".

5.8 Capital Grant Aid

In 1981 The Department of Education and Science withdrew the long-standing capital grant scheme for village halls and passed the responsibility to local authorities, along with an extra element in the Rate Support Grant.

After 1981 most County and District Councils got together to continue the type of partnership established by the DES scheme and The Village Halls Forum has monitored the availability of local authority grants. Predictably there has been a wide difference in the budget levels set by different authorities, some county and district councils making little or no provision and others being more generous. As public expenditure restraints have begun to bite, a number of county councils have withdrawn from the partnership and in 1988 nine made no provision for village halls. *(In 1989 the number fell to seven and in 1990 has risen alarmingly to 12)*. The authorities in these counties, and in others where the provision of capital grants is well below average, need to address themselves to the question of what priority they give to village halls.

Nevertheless, a great many halls have benefitted from local authority grant-aid over the last 7 years and the worst fears about the DES's 1981 grant withdrawal have not been realised. These villages are deeply grateful for the help that they have received and many local authorities deserve congratulation for the generous contributions that they have made towards maintaining the stock of community buildings.

The Sports Council and the Rural Development Commission have introduced grant schemes of their own with specific objectives, which means they are not available to all halls.

5.9 The Benefit of Grants

Capital grant aid helps communities to provide halls that are attractive, warm, have appropriate accommodation for local needs, are safe for public use, are easy to maintain and suited to efficient use and management.

County and District Council grants correlate with above average levels of activity in most of the halls receiving them. Parish Council grants were also associated with slightly higher levels of activity, with the emphasis towards local community activities.

Do you envisage applying for a grant for this work? Please give approximate amount of grant needed?

Grant Application %

Yes 48.53

If yes, within:

2 years 24.96

5 years 10.39

10 years. 1.17

Already applied 13.22

Grant needed %
£

less than 1,000 3.26

1,001-5,000 5.57

5,001-10,000 2.30

10,001-20,000 1.49

20,001-40,000 1.03

40,001-70,000 0.60

70,001-100,000 0.46

over 100,000 0.21

"....it is possible that the full need for capital grants within the next 2 years is nearer £30 million."

".....some committees will be disappointed."

Rural Development Commission grants were received by only 55 halls, almost all in Rural Development Areas. It is possible that these grants are tending to go to premises serving a greater population and a multitude of functions rather than to smaller, more rural halls.

Sports Council grants, as would be expected, appear to generate a significantly higher degree of use of halls for sport purposes. However, of halls receiving Sports Council grants, the percentage being used for another 33 activities also exceeds the average by 5% or more. The provision of modern purpose-built facilities with a greater range of accommodation seems to facilitate better use of a hall. Although 35% of Sports Council grants go to new halls, the remainder go to halls of all ages and these too seem to represent good value for money in terms of promoting activity.

5.10 Grant Applications

Over 75% of the committees planning major improvements or repairs intend to apply for a grant of an average level of 68% of the cost. Given the 36% response to the survey, it is possible that the full need for capital grants within the next 2 years is nearer £30 million. As only about £5 million is currently made available by local authorities each year there is a sizeable shortfall and some committees will be disappointed.

Do you have any
major improvements/
repairs planned in the
next five year?

Improvements Planned

	%
Yes	64.16
Rebuilding	4.57
Extension	15.81
Alteration	8.76
Major Repair	8.05
Major reno- vation	
refurbishment	15.46
New Roof	11.52
New Heating	12.34
Other	22.08

Approximate cost, if
known

Approx. total Cost:
£25,896,626
Number of replies:
1,174
Average cost:
£22,058

"64% of respondent
halls are planning
major improvements
on repairs in the next
5 years".

5.11 Planned Improvements/Repairs

The survey also attempted to forecast grant aid requirements for the five years to come. The results revealed a high level of forward planning. Extensions and renovations were the most widespread type of work planned. Cross correlations indicate that halls planning rebuilding, major repairs, a new roof or heating system, tend to have a poorer range of use. When it comes to devising priorities for grant allocation these halls are likely to be in greatest need of help and have the greatest potential for improvement in use and viability.

Halls planning extensions and alterations were more likely to have a range of facilities and to have been built since 1970 and be better used. This indicates that new halls, and those already well provided for, are better able to plan and finance further improvement to meet local need, so, improving older halls and building new ones, does seem to be cost effective.

The age of the building also has a significant influence on the type of work being carried out. A higher proportion of committees with halls built between 1915-1929 and 1940-45 than of other ages are planning rebuilding and many of these halls are undoubtedly war-time huts. However, as many as 10% of the halls to be rebuilt were built since 1960. The highest proportion of halls planning capital work were built between 1930-1939 and major refurbishment was the principal type of work planned.

5.12 Summary and Recommendations

The combination of a high proportion of halls (71%) regularly carrying out fundraising; less than half meeting ordinary running costs from hire charges and at least 78% relying on voluntary maintenance indicates that village halls generate a tremendous amount of voluntary effort and that, without this, many would close.

There are several reasons for the high level of halls planning capital work, including the number of old halls in poor condition and modern expectations. Also, the committees who replied to this survey are clearly well aware that, in order to best serve the community, their halls need improvements before their use will increase. Although outside assistance is essential, the planning and fundraising for major improvements also has spin-offs, generating community spirit, new activities and helping to integrate newcomers.

Whilst the total size of proposed applications for grant aid is far greater than the total amount likely to be available, grant availability varies widely throughout the country and in practice the shortfall is a more serious problem in some counties than others. The level of grant per project also needs to be sufficient to act as a key to unlock the fundraising by local communities. Experience suggests that a total grant availability of 60-75% of the cost of work is sufficient.

With an adequate and continuous combined level of finance, authorities should not only be able to maintain a programme of village hall provision and improvement but also to help most of the projects that apply for assistance within a reasonable period. The withdrawal of village hall budgets by county councils, particularly without first having made sure that district councils will make up the shortfall, is therefore short-sighted and the councils which have done so would be well advised to reconsider the advantages of partnership. Capital grants for village halls are vital and cost effective, with minimal revenue implications thanks to self-help.

"Capital grants for village halls are vital and cost effective....."

The existence of a partnership system for providing grants based on set maximum and minimum contributions from different parties has proved extremely successful in providing incentive for local community effort. The involvement of RCCs in this process is invaluable.

"The involvement of RCCs in this process is invaluable."

The Association of County Councils, Association of District Councils and National Association of Local Councils have emphasised the importance of village halls and are indeed members of the Village Halls Forum. Their continued support in drawing the attention of member authorities to the benefit of grant aiding village halls would be greatly welcomed.

5.13 Sports Council Grants

One of the best ways in which the Sports Council could fulfil the excellent aims stated in its strategy for the 90's ¹ in rural areas, is by encouraging all Regional Councils to meet a larger proportion of the extra costs involved in providing a village hall or community centre to the sports standards appropriate for the needs of the area to be served.

5.14 Rural Development Commission Grants and Multipurpose Provision

In 1981 a study by the Rural Development Commission ² concluded that there are no overwhelming obstacles to the development of multi-purpose village centres and that the concept is an important one for the future of our villages. It led to the creation of the Commission's grant scheme. However, for village halls to become Multi Purpose Village Centres (or to enter joint provision schemes), finance must be available from several sources, enabling contributing parties to achieve a better standard of provision. Given the fact that the Rural Development Commission grant scheme has only been in existence for a short time and is already over-subscribed, it is hoped that the review of its operation being carried out by the Commission will result in a long term scheme of even wider benefit.

5.15 Local Authorities and Multipurpose Provision

The survey shows that, with some exceptions, few local authorities have yet taken on board the cost effectiveness of contributing to the provision or adaptation of village halls as a means of providing rural services which would otherwise be uneconomic to support. With 39% of the population likely to be over state retirement age in 1990, social service departments and health authorities, for example, would be wise to investigate the potential for making further use of village halls, as a means of delivering community care in rural areas. Multi purpose provision is certainly better than providing several under-used buildings. With careful attention to design, management difficulties can be avoided and Chapter 7 shows some of the services and other activities that a multi-purpose hall can accommodate.

¹ *Sport in the Community Into the 90's - A Strategy for Sport 1988/1993*, The Sports Council, 1988.

² *Multi-Purpose Village Centres*, a study of their feasibility, design and operation. The Rural Development Commission, 1981.

EQUIPMENT

	%
Fridge	35.06
Cooker/	
Microwave	83.13
Urn	74.41
Kettle	94.43
Slide Proj.	2.38
Film Proj.	1.42
Screen	9.71
Black-out	
facilities	26.94
Microphone and	
amplification	
equipment	20.38
Public	
telephone	13.58

Information about equipment available at village halls is useful for potential hirers and for organisations such as Regional Arts Associations who are interested in developing participation in arts activities amongst rural communities. Information about quantities of chairs, tables, cutlery and crockery (question E.2) will be available locally for reference and is not reproduced here. However, the pattern of supply of other equipment may be of general interest.

Outbreaks of violence, vandalism and attacks on unaccompanied individuals have encouraged village hall committees to install public telephones, but the fact that only 14% have chosen to do so reflects the heavy cost of maintaining this facility. By making a reduction in charges for village halls, British Telecom could enable more halls to provide public telephones and, where circumstances necessitate, parish councils could help meet maintenance costs.

THE USE OF VILLAGE HALLS

With the spread of television, some people assumed that village halls would become a thing of the past. However this survey-like others before it - shows that this is certainly not the case.

Seven of the top ten uses of village halls are local community-based activities, which proves just how important the presence of village halls are to community life in rural areas. However the level of badminton and keep fit also illustrates their value as local sports venues - even where accommodation is not of ideal standard - and the level of use for doctor's surgeries and clinics is a sign of their potential for providing services.

The following is a list of the principal activities taking place in village halls, with the % of halls hosting each activity and the total number of sessions per year.

Most Widespread Activities: % halls

Private parties	90
Committee meetings	87
Jumble sales	79
Wedding Recepts.	74
Parish Councils	73
Women's Inst.	69
Polling Station	69
Dances	63
Discos	55
Snr Citizens Club	50

Most Frequent where held:

Social Club
Playgroup
Doctor's Surgery
Library
Badminton
Post Office
Carpet Bowls
Tennis
Ballet Classes
Primary School

Most Frequent Activities in whole sample:

Playgroup
Badminton
Mother & Toddler
Keep Fit
Snr. Citizens
Youth Club
Committee meetings
Women's Institute
Doctor's Surgery
Parish Council

	% halls	Average No. per month	Total sessions pa
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Services

F1	Doctor's surgery	7.30	8	17,076
F2	Clinic (baby)	14.43	2	8,496
F3	Clinic (other)	2.09	3	1,766
F4	Chiropody	5.00	2	2,023
F5	Post Office	1.10	7	2,208
F6	Library	3.65	7	7,099
F7	Blood Transfusion	5.21	3 pa	369
F8	Polling Station	69.12	1 pa	1,389
F9	Parish Council	72.63	1	16,394
F10	Other	13.68		

Social and Recreational

F11	Senior citizens club	49.77	2.5	27,656
F12	Youth Club	33.00	4	25,061
F13	Pre-school playgroup	43.39	10	90,118
F14	Mother and Toddler	36.41	4	29,553
F15	Womens Institute	69.48	1	19,931
F16	Social club (with Bar)	6.59	10	12,401
F17	Bingo	32.08	2	15,041
F18	Garden/horticult. club	27.90	1	4,297
F19	Young wives	5.92	1	1,654
F20	Young Farmers	10.32	1	2,445
F21	Folk Club	3.19	2	1,184
F22	Bell ringers	2.41	1	347
F23	Dance Classes Ballet	15.77	5	14,415
F24	Dance Classes Ballroom	11.02	4	7,936
F25	Old time dancing	14.18	2.5	6,575
F26	Other	36.37		

Activity Index:

No. of activities:	%
	halls
0-5	3
6-10	16
11-20	59
21-31	20
31-40	2

"...over half the respondent halls are used for between 11-20 of the principal uses listed."

Educational

F27 Scouts	7.76	3	4,175
F28 Cubs	10.17	3	6,448
F29 Guides	11.59	3	6,557
F30 Brownies	18.93	3	13,348
F31 Chess	1.13	3	733
F32 Drama	22.33	3	11,947
F33 Choral	5.42	2	2,106
F34 Keep Fit	38.89	4	27,916
F35 Primary School	10.85	5	9,972
F36 Further Education	22.47		

Sports

F37 Badminton	22.90	7	31,835
F38 Table Tennis	15.92	4	8,416
F39 Netball	0.92	3	360
F40 Rifle Club	0.82	3	417
F41 Judo	4.93	4.5	4,163
F42 Carpet Bowls	13.05	5.5	13,348
F43 Yoga	8.97	3	5,407
F44 Other	16.41		

General Events

F45 Weddings	74.23	6 pa	7,235
F46 Private Parties	90.39	1	14,055
F47 Dances	63.45	6 pa	5,765
F48 Discos	55.16	6 pa	4,677
F49 Concerts	39.74	4 pa	2,319
F50 Whist Drives	45.41	2	12,573
F51 50/50 auctions	23.22	2 pa	539
F52 Jumble Sales	79.23	6 pa	7,353
F53 Coffee Mornings	43.89	6 pa	3,436
F54 Committee Meetings	87.13	1	20,058
F55 Film Shows	20.03	4 pa	858
F56 Other	28.86		

Commercial Uses

F57 Antique Fair	13.82	6 pa	1,037
F58 Carpet Sales	7.90	2 pa	181
F59 Other	18.40		

Attached to hall

F60 Cricket	8.58	2	1,273
F61 Football	12.97	2	2,373
F62 Tennis	5.67	6	860
F63 Play equipment	13.68		
F64 Other	9.22		
F65 Other activities	26.69		

A total of 315 other activities were recorded, of which the following were held in over 100 halls:

Art Classes/Clubs
One Day Sales
Church Services/functions/PCC Meetings
Snooker

Totals:

Number of session pa:
548,689
Mean sessions/
activity: 23.76
Mean activities/
hall: 15.93
Mean sessions/
hall pa: 235.39

The totals indicate that, on average, at least 16 of the main activities listed take place in each hall. Bearing in mind that 40% of the villages served have populations below 600 (see Chapter 8), this is testimony to the community spirit for which villages are noted. Nevertheless while some halls are clearly very well used, there is potential for greater use to be made of others. Village halls must continue to adapt to changes in demand and cope with changing legislation. Local authorities and Government, amongst others, can assist them to do so by helping to meet the cost of catering for changes.

THE FUTURE

What is the approximate population of the area served by your hall?

Population Served	%
up to 300	20.45
301-600	22.01
601-1000	15.85
1001-2000	16.59
2001-4000	9.43
over 4000	8.90

If, as the survey indicates, over 900,000 people use 2,330 halls, this suggests that about 3 million people use village halls throughout England. As one in five of the population of England, ie 9 million people, are estimated to live in a rural area, this means that about a third of the rural population use village halls.

Over one fifth of the respondents serve villages/parishes of between 301 and 600 people and a further one fifth serve villages of less than 300. Some villages and hamlets with very small populations (100 or less) do have well used village halls and the hall that is used by only one person is hopefully exceptional!

Most villages are good at trying to draw in those who would benefit most from the contact that shared activities bring, such as the housebound or lonely. However, village halls do need to be more welcoming to young people: a well-supervised youth club can challenge their energies and encourage them to care for the hall. Many villages have few activities to interest young people in comparison with towns and it is extremely important that they have a safe indoor place to meet.

Roughly what proportion of the population uses the hall?

Population using the hall	%
up to 25%	44.70
26-50%	25.63
51-75%	9.18
76-100%	4.01

The proportion of people using the hall gives an interesting reflection on rural life. Analysis of the type and size of settlements may help to explain why almost half of the halls surveyed are used by less than a quarter of the population served. Are they the larger villages with several community facilities or are they commuter villages, growth areas or villages with a large proportion of second homes? Answers to these questions and analysis of the use of halls in different types of settlement could reveal hard information about the way in which planning policies affect community life, and help authorities to plan in such a way as to improve it.

Total number using halls: 941,306
No. of halls: 2,330

Almost a third of respondent halls had plans to develop the use or role of the hall.

Do you have any immediate plans to develop the use of your hall or its role in the community?

It was also pleasing to hear of halls where an improvement project or a new building had generated new uses and new enthusiasm, and those that explained the importance of their hall: that it was the centre of community life.

Yes: 29.49%

Appendix B

OTHER ACTIVITIES

RECORDED IN SECTION F
(see Chapter 7)

Top 10 under each heading in number order:

Social/Recreational (see also educational)

Art Classes/Club
Bridge Club
Dog Training/Club
Flower Arranging
Band or Pop Group Practices
Ladies Circle
Mothers Union
Royal British Legion
Craft Classes/Club
Wine/Beer Circle

Church Functions/Social
Local Society/Association
Slimming Club
Town's Womens Guild
Country/Folk Dancing
Wheelchair Dancing
Scottish Dancing
Tea Dances
Tap Dancing
Modern Dancing
Square Dancing
Barn Dancing
Disco Dancing
Sword Dancing
Clog Dancing
Round Dancing
Sequence Dancing
Morris Dancing
Irish Dancing
Social Club (no bar)
Natural History/Conservation
Church Youth/Pathfinders/CF
Freemasons
Political Club/Meeting
Knitting
Operatic Society
Friendship/Good Companions
National Trust
Order of Buffaloes
Caged Birds Club/Shows
Domino Drives
Carnivals
Countrywomen
Amateur Radio Clubs
Regimental Functions
Holiday Play Schemes
Sailing Club
Music Society
Photographic Club
Goat Club
RNLI
Stroke Club
Parkinsons Disease Society
Majorettes
Model Flying Club
Retirement Fellowship
Pony Club

Probus Club
Gramophone Club
Organ Club
Foresters
Motor Club
Stamp/Coin/Postcards Clubs
Spinning, Weaving, Dying
Self Sufficiency Group
Over 40s/50s
Scrabble
Model Soldiers/War Games
Mah Jong
Orchestra
Well Dressing
Church Flower Festival
Quiz
Girls Friendly Society
Meditation
Bagpipes
Racing Pigeon Club
Angling Society
Model Railway Society
Antique Society
Model Car Racing
Farmers/Ploughing Club
Astronomy
Newspapers for Reading
Solarium
Beer Society
Coffee Bar
Recorder Club
Co-op Guild
Health Club
Fell Rescue
Variety Club
Entertainments Committee
NADFAS
Cadets (Army/RAF)
Rabbit Club
Oddfellows
Crib
Steam Tractors

Educational (see also social/recreational)

Sewing--(eg embroidery, dressmaking)
Upholstery
Sunday School
Local History Classes/Society
Workers Educational Association Classes
First Aid
Lacemaking
Cookery (inc. demonstrations)
Music Lessons
Languages

Stress Group
Boys Brigade
Teachers Seminars
Road Safety (Tufty Club)

Village Halls in England

Youth Orchestra
Beavers
Venture Scouts
University Lectures
Lectures & Talks (various)
Agricultural Training Board
Growmore Club
School Dinners
School PE
Computer Club
Adult Basic Education
Manpower Services Commission
Archeology
Literature
Pottery
Typing
Speech Therapy
Music Appreciation
Classes for Foreign Students
Victorian Studies
Secondary School use
Parents Teachers Assocn
Art Appreciation
Rural Community Council
Mural Group
Genealogists
Play Leadership

Sport

Snooker
Karate
Darts
Billiards
Short Tennis
Skittles
Aerobics
Football (inc. indoor training & junior 5-a-side)
Pool
Cycle Club

Riding Club
Tug O'War
Sub Aqua Club
Car Rally Club
Sports Teas
Stoolball
Slimnastics
Gold
Canoe Club
Fencing
Hockey Training
Roller Hockey
Tai chi
Gymnastics
Archery
Bowls
Cricket
Roller Skating
Martial Arts
Weight Training
Toddlers Gym
Rambles
Tae Kwan Do
Indoor Cricket
Wrestling
Jogging/Running Club
Sports Van Visits
Kung Fu
Squash
Indoor Croquet
Aikido
Kick Boxing
Trampolining
Boxing
Swimming Club

Keep Fit for pensioners
Petanque
Shooting
Rounders
Basketball
Volley Ball
Self Defence
Parachuting Lessons

Commercial Use

(see also services)

Sales eg shoes, toys, clothes, household goods, tools & furniture, wool, jewellery/gold/silver.
Auctions
Car Boot Sales
Markets (inc. flea markets)
Art Sales/Exhibitions
Company Exhibitions/Displays
Fashion Shows
Double Glazing Displays
Slimming Organisation
Nursery School

Property Auction
Stamp Fairs
Wine Tasting
Antique Valuations
Office rented out
Conferences/Seminars
Book Fairs
Trade Fairs
Workshop
Training Course
Sale of Sunday papers
Co-operative Wholesale Society
Sail Cutting
Photography Sessions
Chiropodist clinic
Ice Cream Van in Car Park
Filming
Dog Breeders

Services

Parochial Church Council
Bus token (Pass distribution; annual)
Luncheon Club for the elderly
Public Meetings
Church/religious services
MPs/Councillors surgeries
Planning Appeals/Public Enquiries
Neighbourhood Watch
Day Centre for the elderly/disabled
Meals on Wheels (WRVS)

CAB/advice surgeries
Police surgeries
Activities for the Handicapped
Registrar
District Councils - Rent/Rates/advice centres
Distribution of EEC produce
Freemasons
Twinning Associations
Social Services
Emergencies
Home Helps
Neighbourhood help/care group schemes
Toy library
Red Cross

St. John's Ambulance
 SRN
 Hairdresser/barber
 Bank
 Hospital Psychiatric Group
 Probation Officer
 Court
 Solicitor
 Trade Unions
 Parochial Charity trustees
 Health Visitor classes
 Tax Commissioners
 Tourist Inf. Centre
 Parish Council office
 Alcoholics Anonymous
 Veterinary surgery
 DHSS
 Drop In Centres
 Post Natal Relaxation
 Careers Advice
 Community Resource Centre
 Hearing Aid Tests
 Sessions for the unemployed
 Museum
 Dentists Surgery
 Job Centre displays

General

Charity Sales/Bazaars
 Fairs/Fetes
 Village Produce Shows
 Harvest Supper
 Exhibitions
 Pantomimes
 Coffee Mornings
 Quizzes
 Children's Parties
 Wine and Cheese Parties

Plant Sales
 Pet Shows
 Charity Fundraising
 Country & Western Evenings
 Race Nights
 Christening Parties
 Funerals
 Games Evenings
 Rock Concerts
 Harbour Commissioners
 Book Stalls
 Royal Observer Corps
 Adventure Holidays
 Deanery Synod
 Visits by touring Theatre Companies
 Rotary/Lions/Inner Wheel
 Music Hall
 AGMs
 Banquets/Dinners
 Lunches
 Teas
 Caravan Club visits
 Craft Fairs
 WI/Charity Markets
 Domino Drives
 Barbeques
 Beetle Drives
 Christmas Parties
 Social Evenings
 Parties for the elderly
 Brownie/School/BTCV Camps
 Carol Singing/Party
 Bonfire Night
 Arts Festival
 Cabarets



ACRE is the national rural communities charity, taking action with those who live and work in the countryside. Supporting our members, the 38 county Rural Community Councils, we tackle such problems as access to facilities, shortage of affordable housing and limited job opportunities. At national level, we promote policies which recognise the special needs of rural areas and help rural communities to flourish.

Rural Community Councils (RCCs) are county-level charities working to promote the welfare of rural communities by encouraging community self-help, local initiatives and voluntary effort. Working in partnership with other organisations, they offer advice and practical help to village hall committees, parish councils and many other groups and individuals.

Among its many roles, ACRE provides the national village halls advisory service and the secretariat of the Village Halls Forum, which is the national organisation representing village halls.

ACRE is supported by its member Rural Community Councils, the Rural Development Commission, business and charitable trusts.