

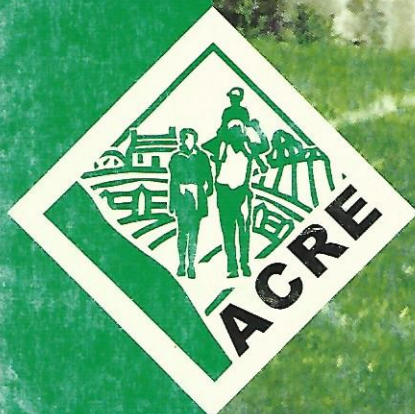
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Village Halls in England 1998

The Report of the 1998 Village Halls Survey

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An ACRE Publication

Village Halls in England 1998

Report of the National Village Halls Survey

An ACRE Publication sponsored by the Rural Development
Commission, Stage Systems, Carnegie UK Trust, CHK Charities, Ernest
Cook Trust and others.

Louise Beaton

Report of the National Village Halls Survey

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is the national association of Rural Community Councils whose shared purpose is to improve the quality of life of local communities, and particularly disadvantaged people, in rural England. ACRE's aim is to facilitate the development of strong, diverse and sustainable communities throughout rural England.

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. (Some RCCs are called county ACRE or Community Action).

One of ACRE's many roles is to provide the national village halls advisory service, which supports the advice services for village halls provided locally by its member community councils. It also provides the secretariat for the Village Halls Forum, representing village halls nationally.

ACRE produces a wide range of publications on village halls and other rural matters. For further details and information about other services please contact ACRE at the address below.

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About the Author

The author and survey co-ordinator was one of ACRE's Village Halls Advisers for fourteen years and her extensive experience and knowledge of village halls has been drawn on in this report. Whilst care is taken to provide accurate information and advice in the publication, ACRE accept no responsibility for omission or errors. Readers are expected to check all essential information and to seek professional or expert advice as appropriate to specific circumstances.

Louise Beaton, Village Halls Survey Co-ordinator, ACRE.

Summary

Introduction

The Village Hall Survey of 1998 was carried out by ACRE, the national association of Rural Community Councils. The results provide a picture of the state of England's village halls, their funding and use and show the changes since 1988 when ACRE carried out the first national survey of village halls. This report discusses the results of the latest survey, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for future action.

Survey forms were distributed to 8158 multi-purpose halls serving populations of 10,000 or less. A total of 3348 were returned, a response rate of 41%. Details of aims and methods are given in Chapter 1. The results given are based on the response from halls unless otherwise stated.

The survey assesses the importance of village halls for rural life and identifies the main issues currently affecting them. The results provide essential information for policy makers in Government, funders such as the National Lottery Boards, the Countryside Agency, local authorities, village hall committees and ACRE's advisory services.

Chapters cover buildings and equipment, management and administration, finance, use and future of village halls. Details of the conclusions and recommendations are given in Chapter 7.

Conclusions

Role of village and community halls

The survey analyses the populations served by individual halls and communities' plans for the development of their hall and its role within their local area.

- There are around 8,900 village halls and similar community buildings in rural England.
- More than 75% of the responding halls are the only multi-purpose community facility in their town or village (Chapter 2).
- Village halls are absolutely essential to rural community life. They are the infrastructure on which many small voluntary and community organisations in rural areas depend. Over 300 different kinds of activities were recorded (Chapter 5).
- Over half serve small villages of less than 1000 people.
- Almost one fifth serve very small villages with under 300 people. Many of these villages have lost other services so the hall is particularly important (Chapter 6).
- The most significant problem facing half of all the responding halls is the lack of support from the community (Chapter 6).
- Almost one fifth of all halls have immediate plans to develop the use of their hall or its role in the community (Chapter 6).
- Village halls and similar community buildings provide local activities and facilities that help to reduce unnecessary car journeys and so contribute to sustainability. They have further potential to contribute to sustainability and combat disadvantage by serving as alternative venues for local services such as doctors' surgeries and post offices (Chapter 5).

Village hall buildings

Data was collected about the number, age, construction, condition and accessibility of halls and the current adequacy of their accommodation and equipment (Chapter 2).

- More than half are over 60 years old.
- 83% were traditionally built brick halls.
- The structural condition of village halls has improved during the last 10 years, although 30% are not in good condition. Much improvement work has been prompted by the introduction of new Health and Safety standards.
- There have been improvements in provision of facilities for the disabled: 60% now have access for wheelchairs and 40% have a toilet facility for disabled people. However, many halls are still not fully accessible.
- Almost 40% of halls have made no improvements in energy efficiency and 53% do not have adequate storage.
- Approximately half of the responding villages are not accessible by public transport. This makes the village hall particularly important to the local community because many people cannot travel elsewhere for social activities.

Management and administration of village halls

Data was collected about the charitable status of village halls, their management, licensing, tenure, registration for VAT, Health and Safety legislation and staffing. The survey results show that there is confusion about trusteeship; advice is given and relevant publications are recommended (Chapter 3).

- 86% of responding halls are Registered Charities.
- Over 60% of halls have difficulty in recruiting people to serve on the management committee.
- The majority of halls operate on a very small scale with a part-time or voluntary cleaner and/or caretaker.
- Only 17% of halls have written Health and Safety policies.
- Only 7 % of halls have written Equal Opportunities policies.
- 77% of halls have Public Entertainment Licences.

Finance - Revenue and Capital

The survey gathered data on running costs, income from hire charges, regular financial support received by village halls, fund-raising, budgeting for repair and maintenance and rate relief. It also collected information about voluntary help, insurance and the sources, use and cost effectiveness of grant aid. The survey identified a series of problems with lottery funding (Chapter 4).

- Local authorities are the key source of capital grant aid for village halls. This grant aid is an important source of partnership funding that enables halls to qualify for Lottery grant aid.
- Enormous amounts of fund-raising and voluntary work help to finance the running of village halls. The respondent halls are raising around £3million each year; indicating that the estimated total of 8900 community halls in rural England are raising around £7.5million a year.
- At the time of survey, Lottery funds were not providing the funding for village and community halls that was anticipated before their

introduction. Community halls have a low success rate for applications for lottery funding. Enquiries by ACRE indicate that only 745 (or 4%) of the 19,000 urban and rural community halls in England have been awarded lottery funding. The Arts Council, Sports Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund have each helped only a very small number of halls.

- In theory village and community halls are eligible for funding from any of the Boards. However, in practice they 'fall between the stools' as many cannot meet the funding criteria because they are not sufficiently arts or sports orientated and the Charities Board themes change. The Boards need to re-appraise their policies, application procedures and criteria so that they are appropriate for multi-purpose community buildings.
- A 'single front door' approach is recommended, setting up a permanent, joint lottery distribution system for community building projects.

Use of village halls

The main purpose of any community building is to provide a place for people to meet and carry out activities as a group. The survey recorded the different activities undertaken in village halls and their levels of use and changes since 1988. The results show the most widespread activities in village halls and the most frequent user groups.

- Significant changes in use have occurred during the last ten years. There has been a decline in use by some activities that serve the most disadvantaged, isolated and vulnerable people who do not have private transport. These include pre-school playgroups, youth clubs, senior citizen clubs, Women's Institutes and baby clinics.
- The key users are still local community activities such as playgroups and senior citizen's clubs. The overall use of village halls has increased slightly during the last ten years. Social and recreational sports and arts activities such as line dancing, amateur dramatics and carpet bowls have increased.

Recommendations

For Government

1. The current Government has created a climate of partnership with the voluntary sector that is very welcome. Nevertheless, the important role of community buildings needs better acknowledgement and support. Community buildings can improve the quality of life for rural populations, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. They also make a significant contribution to sustainability by reducing the need for car journeys. The Rural White Paper due to be published in 1999 presents an opportunity for the Government to signal its support for village halls.

2. The systems for lottery funding for community buildings need to be improved and simplified. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and/or the Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sport should investigate with the Lottery Boards how accessibility can be improved. The DCMS should encourage the Lottery Boards to develop a permanent, joint lottery distribution system for capital grants for community building projects.

3. All Government Departments need to apply the *small organisations' litmus test*, to ensure that new legislation does not place inappropriate standards on volunteers running small charities.

4. The Department for Education and Employment should work with the Pre-School Learning Alliance to address the reduction in the number of rural playgroups that may stem from the introduction of nursery education for 4 year olds.

5. The Treasury should implement recommendations made to the Chancellor's Review of Charity Taxation and introduce a new VAT refund scheme for charitable halls and similar community buildings.

For Local Government

1. Local authorities should continue to provide capital finance for improvements to community buildings in order to ensure that they continue to play a crucial role in sustaining community life in rural areas.

2. Local authorities should help village hall committees to plan for the future and encourage the development of new opportunities to address disadvantage in rural communities.

3. Local authorities should consider providing 100% rate relief for charitable community facilities where they do not already do so.

4. Local authorities should support community buildings by providing 'help in kind' to encourage more effective management and use.

For those running community buildings

1. Management committees should ensure that their building is meeting the needs of the community, and be receptive to new ideas and opportunities. They should also recognise the danger of spending all their energy and resources in looking after the building.

2. Management committees should be encouraged to bring their facilities for people with disabilities, their employment practices and Health and Safety policies up to date.

3. Management committees should recognise the role of their hall in improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people and actively encourage use of the hall by these groups.

4. Management committees should address the difficulties they face in recruiting volunteers, although it is recognised that there may not be an easy solution.

For the ACRE network and other voluntary sector organisations

1. The ACRE network, regional, European and national voluntary sectors should use the survey to raise awareness of the importance of supporting village and community halls at community level and among local authorities and government departments and agencies.

2. The future arrangements and levels of capital funding for community building projects need to be discussed with the DCMS, the National Lottery distributors, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
3. The level of regular financial support from parish councils for village and community halls needs to be improved with the support of the LGA and the NALC.
4. Village hall committees should be encouraged to address the need for adequate provision for disabled people, to encourage use by disadvantaged people and encourage the National Lottery Boards and other funders to support such provision.
5. Village hall committees should be encouraged to address employment practices, Equal Opportunities policies and recruitment difficulties.
6. The ACRE network and the Charity Commission should work together to promote clear understanding of trusteeship by village hall committees.

For the Lottery Boards

1. Lottery distributors need to assess whether their priorities and mechanisms for distributing grant aid are appropriate for village and community halls. They should work together to develop common and appropriate application forms for community building projects.
2. The New Opportunities Fund should develop the potential of village and community halls to be 'Healthy Living Centres' for every village by helping them to offer a range of activities to keep people mentally alert, physically fit and able to maintain their independence.

For Health Authorities and Primary Health Care Teams

1. Health Authorities and Primary Health Care Teams need to consider the advantages of locating visiting surgeries, clinics and other services in village halls and other community buildings where they are more accessible to rural people.
2. Primary Health Care teams need to work with village hall committees to develop village halls and similar buildings as 'Healthy Living Centres' where people can participate in activities for their physical and mental well being.

For the wider public

1. Rural communities need to be aware of the importance of their village hall and its current and potential future role in their local area.

2. Rural communities need to actively support their village hall or community centre and be aware of the vital role of volunteers in village hall management. It is up to each community to take the lead in ensuring their village hall provides the facilities their village needs to be sustainable in the 21st Century.

Introduction

“Communities, urban or rural, and interest groups to which they give birth, have a problem if they have nowhere to meet. They need premises that are as affordable as they are adaptable, that are universally acceptable, even for the disabled, and that are warm in winter and comfortable to use.”¹

Village halls are vitally important, but often overlooked, community resources that are essential to the quality of life for many people living in rural areas. The old public image of a cold, dusty, faded hut used only for fetes is out of date and this report sets the picture straight.

There are around 8,900 village halls and similar facilities, such as community centres and church halls, in rural England. (For convenience they are generally called ‘village halls’ in this report.) Village halls are very diverse. There are many modern purpose-built, fully equipped halls as well as Listed Buildings and converted schools, and still some old First World War huts. They are particularly important for people without private transport: the elderly, infirm, young, disabled people and mothers with small children. By providing local facilities that are easily accessible to local people, village halls also contribute to sustainability in rural communities.

In 1988 ACRE, the national association of Rural Community Councils, carried out the first survey of village halls in England which had far reaching effects. Fire precaution standards that were being prepared by the Home Office were altered in the light of the survey findings and the results also stopped VAT being charged on the construction of new halls. Overall the results of the 1988 survey have informed and influenced a wide range of initiatives, including the ‘Red Tape’ initiatives of the Cabinet Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

In 1998 ACRE conducted a second survey of village halls in England. The survey aimed to monitor changes that had occurred in the management, administration and use of village halls since 1988. The results of the 1998 survey provide a snapshot of 3,348 village halls and similar community buildings in rural England. They record how rural community halls are managed, used and funded; the type of buildings and their age and accommodation. The survey also collected data about the problems and opportunities currently affecting village halls and changes that have occurred since 1988.

During the ten years between 1988 and 1998 there have been major changes in legislation affecting charities running community buildings, particularly in the area of licensing, charity law and taxation. The closure of village services, shops, pubs, churches, bus services and schools has also continued throughout the ten year period.

1. *Landscapes of Poverty*. Michael Simmons, 1997

The one facility that most villages have kept is their village hall. This is thanks to the fact that being owned and managed by the local community village halls can respond to local needs and win local support to ride rough times. Indeed, as other services have closed the importance of village halls has grown, both as a meeting place for the community and as a base for alternative forms of provision, such as visiting doctors' surgeries and post offices.

The results of the 1998 survey show just how heavily dependent rural society is on the volunteers who run and raise funds for village halls. They also show the importance of outside funding and support from Government, local authorities, Lottery Boards and charities in helping to maintain and replace the nation's village halls. ACRE would welcome observations and responses to the recommendations.

Chapter I

Aims and Methods

Introduction

The 1998 Village Halls Survey was carried out by the charity ACRE. Survey forms were mailed by Rural Community Councils to 8,158 village halls and similar community buildings in rural England in summer 1998. A total of 3,348 forms were returned, a response of 41%. ACRE carried out the first survey of this kind in 1988, and the 1998 survey monitored changes over the intervening ten years.

Aims

The aims of the survey were to:

- Assess the importance of village halls for rural life
- Identify the level of need for financial support and provide this information to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the National Lottery Boards, local authorities and other funders
- Find out major problems for village halls at present and guide ACRE's advisory services accordingly
- Monitor changes during the last ten years
- Enable county directories to be compiled, with information for hirers and public authorities which might use halls
- Establish a database of village halls in each participating county
- Share ideas and good practice among village and community halls.

What are village halls?

The term 'village halls' is used for convenience in this report to cover a variety of community buildings serving rural areas. Most village halls are independent charities run for the benefit of the local community and managed by a committee of volunteers representing local user organisations and elected members of the public. However, similar buildings, including community centres or halls provided by parish or town councils as part of their statutory function (often called the town or parish hall), church halls, Women's Institute halls, youth centres, sports pavilions, scout huts and schools, all accommodate a variety of community activities.

The first survey of village halls in England, 1988

The first national survey of village halls in England was carried out by ACRE in 1988 and proved extremely successful. It provided, for the first time, accurate information about village and community halls in rural England. This enabled ACRE and the Rural Community Council network to bring the importance of village and community halls to national attention. The results, from almost 3,000 halls, clearly showed the need for substantial public funding for the improvement and replacement of many village halls.

The 1988 survey found that:

- Over half the halls were more than 50 years old
- 64% were planning major improvements within the next five years
- £30million in capital grant aid was needed over the next two years
- Only 44% covered their running costs from hire charges
- Between £5million and £8million was being raised by volunteers each year towards both running costs and improvements
- Less than half had access for disabled people and only 17% had toilets with wheelchair access.

As a result of the information obtained and resultant publicity, substantial funding and tax benefits were secured for village and community halls. These included:

Funding:

The Millennium Commission awarded £10million to ACRE's 21st Century Halls for England Fund to renovate and build new halls for the Millennium.

The Rural Development Commission created a national grant scheme worth £1million per year and increased the capital for the national Village Halls Loan Fund.

The Carnegie UK Trust provided funding for the purchase of equipment to increase use of village halls.

Some local authorities gave increased funding for village hall improvements.

Taxation:

Relief from VAT on the building of new village halls which would have cost between £17,500 and £40,000 for each new hall.

Legislation:

Appropriate accounting, fire safety and public health standards have saved much unnecessary expense.

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

Although major improvements have been secured since 1988 there were a number of reasons for updating the survey:

- Ten years is a reasonable period to monitor change, to ascertain current problems which enables ACRE to tailor its work for, and on behalf of, village halls.
- The last ten years has seen huge increases in legislation affecting standards of provision at village halls e.g. environmental health, fire and electrical safety, and the Disability Discrimination Act. In order to assess the future impact and possible need for resources in these areas, it is important to know what provision has already been made.
- The National Lottery has brought additional funding sources for village hall improvement projects; however, it has also brought a huge increase in the complexity of application and project funding. Most lottery boards require partnership funding, which means that local authority and other funding sources remain important. ACRE had identified the need for improvements in the way lottery funding is allocated for village hall projects and required the survey data to help inform the case.
- The current Government Review of Charity Taxation presents an opportunity to renew the case for relief from VAT on alterations and improvements. VAT has been a huge burden on voluntary fundraising since 1983.
- Village hall committees found the 1988 survey a useful source of ideas and wanted to know how they compared with others.

The survey form

The survey form was based on the one used in 1988, but was slightly modified and updated. New questions covered topics such as energy efficiency, Health and Safety and lottery funding.

Distribution

Survey forms were distributed, with Freepost envelopes, by county Rural Community Councils (RCCs) in June/July 1998, to all known multi-purpose halls serving populations of 10,000 or less ¹(except Staffordshire and Yorkshire, see below). Local publicity also brought enquiries.

Two counties were not covered by the survey: Staffordshire and Yorkshire. The Community Council of Staffordshire chose not to take part; Yorkshire RCC had hoped to include the results of their own survey but, unfortunately, these were not available in time. The Community Council of Devon, which had also carried out a survey of its own, made the results available and mailed a shorter version of the national form, covering the questions not dealt with in its own survey.

Analysis

Analysis was carried out nationally by the Sussex Rural Community Council and converted into Microsoft Office Excel and Access 95. The forms have been returned to the appropriate RCC, together with a database for their county. It is hoped that halls that did not take part will obtain copies of the form from their RCC, so that each database can gradually be expanded.

Validation

In order to test for serious bias, the results have been compared with the following surveys:

A portrait of Devon's Village Halls, Kathleen Perkins, Val Garrett and Sarah Taragon, Community Council of Devon, 1998

Directory of village halls in Nottinghamshire, Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council, 1995

Village Halls in England: The Ronseal Village Halls Survey, Louise Beaton, ACRE, 1988

Forgotten Resources?, The role of community buildings in strengthening local communities, Paul Marriott, 1997

Survey of Rural Services 1997, M Spilsbury and N Lloyd, carried out for the Rural Development Commission.

The results indicate that this survey is statistically valid and has covered a proper cross-section of rural community facilities. Some variation is apparent between counties, reflecting availability of funding and local geography e.g. in age, condition and building materials. Any bias may be towards halls with active committees who have recently sought grant aid or advice.

1. The definition of 'rural' adopted by the Rural Development Commission

Results

The return was as follows:

	Count	Percent
Forms distributed:	8,158	
Forms returned:	3,348	41%
No hall:	57	1.7%
Total completed:	3,292	

In addition, the previous survey recorded approximately 500 halls in Yorkshire and 175 in Staffordshire, indicating that there are approximately 8,900 village and similar community halls in rural England.

Results given are based on responding halls unless otherwise stated. Where responses given do not total 100% the remainder did not reply to that question.

Response by County

	Distributed	Returned	Response rate (%)
Former Avon	129	59	46
Bedfordshire	110	67	61
Berkshire	110	37	34
Buckinghamshire	202	68	34
Cambridgeshire	132	59	45
Cheshire	250	41	16
Cornwall	228	137	60
Cumbria	329	81	25
Derbyshire	265	67	25
Devon	315	170	48
Dorset	195	90	46
Durham	220	56	25
Essex	353	128	36
Gloucestershire	262	82	31
Hampshire	348	155	44.5
Hereford & Worcester	316	121	38
Hertfordshire	148	37	25
Former Humberside	290	86	30
Isle of Wight	40	26	65
Kent	338	181	54
Lancashire	138	59	43
Leicestershire	168	52	31
Lincolnshire	330	177	54
Norfolk	404	205	51
Northamptonshire	208	76	36
Northumberland	103	42	41
Nottinghamshire	172	62	36
Oxfordshire	255	96	38
Rutland	30	27	90
Shropshire	196	110	56
Somerset	305	169	55
Staffordshire	0	0	0
Suffolk	317	75	24
Surrey	153	48	31
Sussex - East and West	380	180	47
Teesside	40	26	65
Warwickshire	155	79	51
Wiltshire	224	116	52
Yorkshire	0	0	0
Total	8,158	3,348	Average of 41

Chapter 2

Buildings and Equipment

Every village hall is unique. They vary from village to village, depending on local history, the size and nature of the village, local materials and availability of funding. This chapter covers the number, age, construction, condition and accessibility of village halls, their adequacy, accommodation and equipment.

A current picture of the condition of village halls is important for all those whose policies, funding and support can affect village halls e.g. local authorities, the Government, Lottery Boards and others. The survey collected this data partly to provide funders, both nationally and locally, with an indication of the level of need for capital grant aid for improvement and to enable funding and support to be targeted at those halls most in need of improvement.

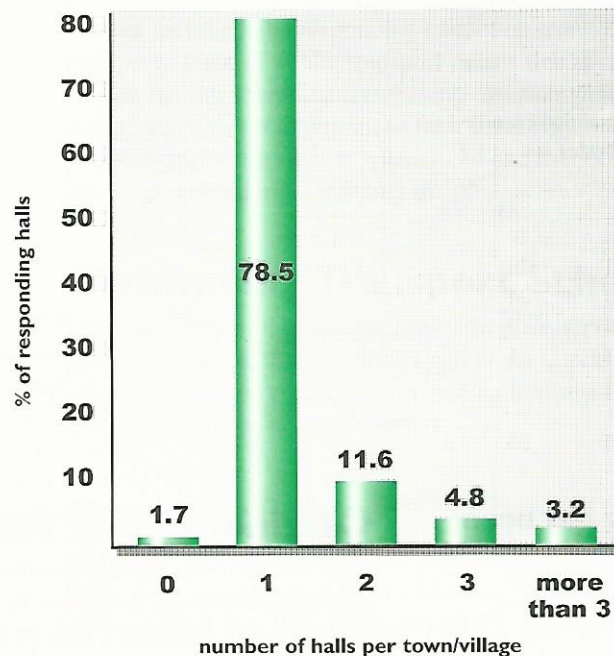
A1. How many village or community halls does your village or town have?

No of Halls	Count	%	1988
0	57	1.7	3.6
1	2,631	78.5	
2*	390	11.6	
3*	164	4.8	
>3*	107	3.2	
Total	3,349		

* In villages with two or more halls each may have responded to the survey so these figures may be higher than they should be.

Number of halls in each village

Over 75% of the respondent halls are the only multi-purpose village hall or similar community hall in their town or village. This underlines the importance of such facilities in rural areas, where there are few alternative meeting places. There appears to have been a fall in the number of towns/villages without any kind of community meeting place since the 1988 survey. The number of facilities tends to rise with population size, few villages with a population of less than 1,000 having two or more meeting places.



Other converted buildings include:

Working Mens/Mens Clubs,
factories/workshops, private houses,
temperance halls, sports pavilions, British
Legion halls, drill halls, guildhalls, market
halls, WI halls, parish rooms, breweries,
pubs, maltings, shops, offices, cinemas,
hospitals, almshouses, a portacabin used
for North Sea workers' accommodation,
petrol station, mobile classroom, Corn
Mill, RAF hangar, telephone exchange,
rectory, fourteenth century monastery, a
fire station and a police house.

B4. How much car parking is available for village hall users?

	Count	%
None	23	16.7
10 or less spaces	673	21.5
11 - 19 spaces	1,583	50.8
19+ spaces	283	9.1

B5. Can the hall regularly be reached by public transport?

(i.e. several services a day)

	Count	%
Yes	1,610	48.9
No	1,580	48.0

B6. Is there a local community minibus/social car scheme?

	Count	%
Yes	623	18.9
No	2,551	77.5

B7. What is the construction of the walls?

	Count	%	1988
Brick	2,121	61.7	63
Stone	582	16.9	19.6
Wood	472	13.0	18.9
Corrugated Iron	106	3.0	5.0
Cement Block	355	10.3	2.4
Pre-cast concrete	136	3.9	0.1
Asbestos	5	0.1	1.2
Other	154	4.5	6.1

Communities have certainly been imaginative in seizing opportunities. An amazing variety of buildings have been converted and they reflect the local history. The most unusual must be a former sewage works in Cambridgeshire, identified in the 1988 survey!

Any community contemplating the conversion into a village hall from a different kind of charity building, is strongly advised to seek advice from their RCC, as it is likely that the Charity Commission will need to be involved.

Car Parking

In 1988, 75% of respondents had a car park. The figure has increased to 81%, of which almost a quarter are very small, with less than 10 spaces.

For local events, many local people can be expected to walk. However, disabled or infirm people, and those setting things up, need to park close to the hall. Lack of car parking can cause traffic congestion. It also restricts a hall's hire for large events, and bookings with people coming from outside the village, such as wedding receptions.

Although car parks of sufficient size are now a condition of planning consent, provision of a car park *per se* is a low priority for most funders. Yet it can make a big difference to accessibility and use, and, therefore, the viability, of a hall.

Public Transport

Almost half the halls responding cannot be reached by regular public transport. Lack of public transport means that those without cars have to rely on facilities within easy walking or cycling distance. This is why village halls are so important to their local community. Lack of evening public transport services is widespread and this necessitates local activities particularly for young people.

Community Transport Schemes

Less than 20% of the villages responding are served by a community transport scheme. Such schemes can be an important alternative to public transport in rural areas, providing a means of reaching services and entertainment in nearby towns.

Construction

Although brick is nationally the major form of material used in 62% of halls, there is substantial local variation. In Devon, for example, only 37% are brick but 26% are stone and 8% pre-fabricated concrete.

Comparison with the 1988 results shows a slight reduction in the percentage of halls with less substantial, high-maintenance types of construction, such as wood, corrugated iron and asbestos. (See also comments on roofs below). The use of pre-cast concrete seems to be increasing, while the use of stone is falling.

Other building materials included flint (6), mudlump, clay pot and chicken wire with render!

Other converted buildings include:

Working Mens/Mens Clubs, factories/workshops, private houses, temperance halls, sports pavilions, British Legion halls, drill halls, guildhalls, market halls, WI halls, parish rooms, breweries, pubs, maltings, shops, offices, cinemas, hospitals, almshouses, a portacabin used for North Sea workers' accommodation, petrol station, mobile classroom, Corn Mill, RAF hangar, telephone exchange, rectory, fourteenth century monastery, a fire station and a police house.

B4. How much car parking is available for village hall users?

	Count	%
None	23	16.7
10 or less spaces	673	21.5
11 - 19 spaces	1,583	50.8
19+ spaces	283	9.1

B5. Can the hall regularly be reached by public transport?

(i.e. several services a day)

	Count	%
Yes	1,610	48.9
No	1,580	48.0

B6. Is there a local community minibus/social car scheme?

	Count	%
Yes	623	18.9
No	2,551	77.5

B7. What is the construction of the walls?

	Count	%	1988
Brick	2,121	61.7	63
Stone	582	16.9	19.6
Wood	472	13.0	18.9
Corrugated Iron	106	3.0	5.0
Cement Block	355	10.3	2.4
Pre-cast concrete	136	3.9	0.1
Asbestos	5	0.1	1.2
Other	154	4.5	6.1

Communities have certainly been imaginative in seizing opportunities. An amazing variety of buildings have been converted and they reflect the local history. The most unusual must be a former sewage works in Cambridgeshire, identified in the 1988 survey!

Any community contemplating the conversion into a village hall from a different kind of charity building, is strongly advised to seek advice from their RCC, as it is likely that the Charity Commission will need to be involved.

Car Parking

In 1988, 75% of respondents had a car park. The figure has increased to 81%, of which almost a quarter are very small, with less than 10 spaces.

For local events, many local people can be expected to walk. However, disabled or infirm people, and those setting things up, need to park close to the hall. Lack of car parking can cause traffic congestion. It also restricts a hall's hire for large events, and bookings with people coming from outside the village, such as wedding receptions.

Although car parks of sufficient size are now a condition of planning consent, provision of a car park *per se* is a low priority for most funders. Yet it can make a big difference to accessibility and use, and, therefore, the viability, of a hall.

Public Transport

Almost half the halls responding cannot be reached by regular public transport. Lack of public transport means that those without cars have to rely on facilities within easy walking or cycling distance. This is why village halls are so important to their local community. Lack of evening public transport services is widespread and this necessitates local activities particularly for young people.

Community Transport Schemes

Less than 20% of the villages responding are served by a community transport scheme. Such schemes can be an important alternative to public transport in rural areas, providing a means of reaching services and entertainment in nearby towns.

Construction

Although brick is nationally the major form of material used in 62% of halls, there is substantial local variation. In Devon, for example, only 37% are brick but 26% are stone and 8% pre-fabricated concrete.

Comparison with the 1988 results shows a slight reduction in the percentage of halls with less substantial, high-maintenance types of construction, such as wood, corrugated iron and asbestos. (See also comments on roofs below). The use of pre-cast concrete seems to be increasing, while the use of stone is falling.

Other building materials included flint (6), mudlump, clay pot and chicken wire with render!

B8. What is the general condition of the hall (excluding the roof)?

	Count	%	1988
Good	2,332	67.9	-
Fair	817	3.8	-
Poor	237	6.9	-
Walls Need repair/attention	-	-	30

Condition

There appears to have been a welcome improvement in the structural condition of village halls over the last ten years. Nevertheless there is some way to go in making the country's halls fit for the next Millennium, with 30% still not in good condition.

The chapter on finance indicates that the improvement may be due, in part, to the introduction of new Health and Safety legislation during this period. This has necessitated the replacement and improvement of old kitchens and toilets, and led to the replacement of some old worn-out First World War huts and similar buildings. Much of the available grant aid over the last five years has gone on such work.

It is generally preferable for a community to reduce future maintenance costs by building a more substantial hall, if funding is available, rather than opt for a pre-fabricated wooden hall. Local planning policy in some areas requires the use of local stone or brick.

B9. What material is the main roof?

	Count	%	1988
Slate	880	25.6	24.2
Thatch	15	0.4	0.6
Tiles	1,532	44.5	42.1
Asbestos	359	10.4	16.4
Metal	330	9.6	8.5
Felt	213	6.2	12.0
Other	166	4.8	2.7

The Roof

Tiles or slate are the commonest roofing materials and there appears to be a slight trend towards using more substantial materials such as these. There has been a welcome 6% drop in halls with felt roofs, which have a shorter life, and those with asbestos roofs, possibly owing to the high priority now being given by local authorities to the removal of asbestos from buildings. Other forms of roofing include stone, wood, shingles, copper and plastic sheets. In 1988, 33 halls had corrugated iron roofs, but none were recorded this time.

Is the roof's condition?

	Count	%	1988
Good	2,016	64.6	
Fair	771	24.7	
Poor	277	8.9	11

Roof condition appears to be improving slightly. However, over half of those halls with walls in poor condition, also have roofs in poor condition.

B10. Is any part of the roof a flat roof?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	1,559	47.4	53.8
No	1,599	48.6	

There has been a slight fall since 1988 in the percentage of halls with flat roofs. Flat roofs have a shorter life expectancy (15 or so years) and higher maintenance requirements than pitched roofs. They are, therefore, preferably avoided. However, for reasons of economy they are unfortunately still commonly used over small extensions. Given the high maintenance requirements of flat roofs, their overall condition is not bad. However, the 1988 survey showed significant variations in proportions of flat roofs between counties.

If Yes, is the flat roof's condition?

	Count	%	1988
Good	816	24.8	
Fair	85	17.8	
Poor	186	5.7	7.5

B11. Is the hall?

	Count	%	1988
A listed building	216	6.6	6.3
In a Conservation Area	1,106	33.6	-
Originally built as a memorial?	476	14.5	-

Listed Buildings

34% of the halls surveyed are in Conservation Areas. Halls that are Listed Buildings, memorial halls and halls in Conservation Areas can all be eligible for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Some halls fall into more than one of these categories, so it would appear that between 34% and 50% are eligible for Heritage Lottery funding.

Listed building status brings the advantage of relief from VAT on approved building alterations. However, adapting them to modern Health and Safety requirements, and installing facilities for disabled people, can be difficult and costly. Local authority building conservation grants and Heritage Lottery funding can, therefore, make an important contribution to their upkeep.

B12. What is the main type of heating system?

	Count	%
Electric Convector/ Fan	628	18.3
Radiant	933	27.1
Night Storage	262	7.6
Gas, mains	1048	30.5
Mobile (gas) heaters	65	2.1
Gas (lpg tank)	101	2.9
Oil	545	15.9
Other	107	3.1

Other forms of heating were solid fuel (coal or wood burning stoves) and one with ceramic plaque heaters. Previously solar panels and underfloor heating have also been recorded.

Heating

Adequate heating is crucial if a village hall is to serve the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as the very young, elderly, disabled and infirm e.g. for baby clinics, lunch clubs, senior citizen's, chiropody etc. Choice of heating system is, therefore, one of the most important decisions a village hall committee has to make when designing or improving a hall. The amount of use a hall has, and its fabric, can both make a difference to the choice of installation and economy of use.

Comparison with the 1988 results shows a slight increase in the proportion of halls using mains gas (from 26% to 30%), a reduction in those using electric convector/radiant heating (from 55% to 46%) and a slight increase in the use of storage heaters. The proportion using bottled gas has dropped from 10% to 5%. These changes probably reflect the availability and relative economy of installing and running different forms of heating. As use grows, halls are more likely to have gas heating, which is commensurate with better used halls being situated in larger villages/towns with mains gas.

Any halls considering changing their heating system are strongly recommended to consult ACRE's publication *Plan, Design and Build* for guidance on the best system for their hall. (See Appendix C)

B13. If the heating is electric, is it slot metered?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	572	17.4	18.3
No	1,260	38.3	

Vulnerability to theft and lack of convenience for hirers account for the fact that most halls with electric heating do not have slot meters. Although they have the advantage of preventing heating being left on after the building is vacated, modern electronic controls now offer an alternative.

B14. Have any steps been taken to provide for energy efficiency?

	Count	%
None	1,224	37.2
Energy Efficiency Survey	296	9.0
Draught Proofing	437	13.3
Double glazing	1,058	32.1
Heating system	779	23.7
Other	460	14.0

Other steps:	
Roof Insulation	50
Wall Insulation	16
Lowered ceilings	12

Energy Efficiency

Almost 40% of halls have taken no steps to improve energy efficiency. A small proportion have carried out more than one measure to improve energy efficiency.

In some parts of the country it can be difficult to find cheap, independent sources of local advice about energy efficiency. Committees short of funds are naturally cautious about investing in work which may have a long payback period. However, a DIY energy efficiency survey can be carried out using the NEA Community Buildings pack (see Appendix C), which can give an indication of which measures would prove cost-effective. 60% of halls were built before energy conservation became an issue, so better promotion among village halls of the available grant schemes and advice sources is needed. These include Rural Action, the Shell Better Britain Campaign and the National Energy Action (NEA) charity.

B15. Is the floor of the main hall mostly:

	Count	%	1988
Wood strip/ Boards	1,989	63.7	66.4
Wood block	631	20.2	21.0
Vinyl covered	322	10.3	8.0
Granwood	122	3.9	2.45
Other	125	4.0	5.4

Other flooring included concrete, carpet, stone tiles and chipboard.

Is the floor's condition?

	Count	%
Good	2,110	61.7
Fair	1,043	30.5
Poor	213	6.2

B16. Is the drainage system?

	Count	%
Mains	2,634	76.6
Cesspit/ Septic Tank	630	18.3

B17. Does the hall have:

	Count	%	1988
Permanent Stage	1,606	46.7	52
Moveable Stage	675	19.6	20
No Stage	1,124	32.7	28
Stage lighting	978	29.7	
Sound Equipment	328	10.0	
Stage curtains	1,308	41.9	

Floors

84% of halls have a wooden floor in their main hall.

A wood strip floor is by far the commonest and best option for the main hall of most village halls because of its durability, spring and warmth. Although it is expensive, the use of cheaper alternatives has generally been found to be less satisfactory. In halls used intermittently, condensation on cold vinyl floors has proved hazardous and necessitated replacement with wood. Committees planning to install new or replacement flooring are recommended to consult ACRE's publication *Plan, Design and Build* or its Information Sheet on *Floors*. (See Appendix C).

Even wooden floors have a limited lifespan, however well maintained, and deterioration can affect use of the hall. The replacement of a hall's floor it is an extremely expensive item and without a decent floor a hall cannot function. It should, therefore, be given higher priority by funders.

Drainage

Over 75% of halls responding are on mains drainage. Those with septic tanks have the task and cost of arranging for tanks to be emptied.

Stage and Stage Equipment

Of the halls responding 48% have a permanent stage, but over 30% have no stage at all and almost 60% no stage equipment. A stage and stage equipment are assets which can improve use for community activities. A stage also provides a performance area for visiting theatre companies, amateur dramatics, pantomimes, concerts, shows and presentations. However, a permanent stage is expensive and can be intrusive in terms of space.

Funding is available from the Carnegie UK Trust to help halls serving rural communities purchase equipment which enables new activities to take place, and the Trust has kindly assisted a number of halls to buy stage equipment. (See Appendix D for address). This is an area which the Arts Lottery Fund needs to address if more involvement in the Arts is to be developed in rural areas.

Demountable staging is an attractive option that provides a cost-effective and more flexible solution, allowing different arrangements for specific events. Lightweight and easy-to-manage equipment is essential if it is to be used by all members of the community. A number of systems are now available, such as those provided by Stage Systems of Loughborough. (See inside cover for further details). This company also provides sound, lighting and installation, and a hire facility.

B18. Does the building have the following?

	Count	%	1988
Main Hall	3,168	96.2	98.5
Small Hall	862	26.2	20.3
Committee Room(s)	1,481	45.0	49.6
Kitchen	3,167	96.2	97.9
Entrance Hall	2,223	67.5	70.8
Separate Bar/Lounge	486	14.8	14.1
Changing Rooms	669	20.3	16.3
Indoor toilets (both sexes) *	3,043	92.4	94.4
Showers	336	10.2	7.7
Store Room	2,290	69.6	61.3
Baby changing facilities	209	6.3	
Skittle alley	67	2.0	2.2
Coffee bar/servery	1,058	32.1	29.5
Other(s)	176	5.3	11.3

Other facilities included:

Doctor's surgery, billiards room, chair-lift, classrooms, cloakroom, garden, allotments, office, IT room, lighting gallery, lounge, outside store, playgroup room, stage dressing rooms.

Facility	Count	%	1988
Toilet(s) for disabled	1,353	41.1	16.7
Access for wheelchairs	2,052	62.3	48.0
Hearing loop	224	7.2	-

Are parking spaces designated for disabled people?

	Count	%
Yes	442	13.4
No	2,424	73.6

Accommodation

Whilst many village halls have a wide range of accommodation, the typical village hall has a main hall, kitchen and toilets, perhaps with a store, entrance hall and wheelchair access.

Curiously, a marginally lower proportion of respondent halls gave a main hall, kitchen, toilets and committee room among their facilities in 1998, compared with 1988. This may be accounted for by the fact that some halls did not respond to this question e.g. because they are in the process of building a new hall.

A greater number of halls now also have small halls, changing rooms, showers and store rooms.

Provision for disabled people

Despite a dramatic improvement in facilities for disabled people since the 1988 survey, which highlighted the need for improvement, provision is still not good enough. Now 60% have access for wheelchairs but only 40% have a toilet(s) for disabled people. Only 7% have an induction loop for the hard of hearing. Many have gravel car parks with no hard paths for wheelchairs and prams.

With the number of elderly and frail increasing as a proportion of the population, it is very important that everyone can use village halls and community centres. Halls provide local activities and facilities that are very important for vulnerable people. The Disability Discrimination Act 1997 requires service providers, which includes those running community buildings, to do all that is reasonable and practicable to make their halls accessible by the year 2002. The recent decision of the National Lottery Charities Board to accept applications that are solely for the provision of facilities for disabled people is particularly welcome.

Some facilities, such as designated parking spaces and some measures for the partially sighted, cost little to provide, yet they can make a huge difference in enabling disabled people to participate in, and contribute to, community life. The ACRE Information Sheet *Making Village Halls Accessible* and the book *Plan, Design and Build* both cover provision for disabilities. (See Appendix C.)

B19. What is the seating capacity of each room used for meetings?

(without tables, excludes Devon)

Main Hall	Count	%
Up to 50	175	5.6
51-100	1,242	39.8
101-150	851	27.2
151-200	509	16.3
201-250	180	5.8
over 250	113	3.6

Second Hall (excludes Devon)

Up to 50	512	16.4
51-100	216	6.9
101-150	32	1.0
151-200	8	0.3
over 250	5	0.2

Committee Room

Up to 50	1,314	42.1
51-100	44	1.4
101-150	8	0.3

Other Rooms

Up to 50	210	6.7
51-100	8	0.3

B20. What is the dancing capacity of the main hall?

	Count	%
Up to 50	441	13.4
51-100	1,258	38.2
101-150	758	23.0
151-200	450	13.7
201-250	143	4.3
over 250	85	2.6

B21. What is the approximate size of the main hall?

	Count	%
Up to 100m ²	985	29.9
101-200m ²	1,204	36.6
201-300m ²	318	9.7
301-400m ²	154	4.7
over 400m ²	77	2.3

B22. Is the hall's storage space adequate?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	1,397	44.7	
No	1,659	53.1	59.98

Size of halls

The majority of halls (67%) have main halls that seat between 50 and 150 people and 65% are below 200m². (A hall with a single badminton court needs to be 17m x 8.5m and this will seat an audience of 150). Usually the village hall is the only space within a village capable of accommodating this number of people, which is why they are widely used for public meetings and occasionally as emergency shelters.

Where there is a second hall it usually seats fewer than 50 people. Over 40% have a committee room, usually seating less than 50 people.

Detailed information about individual halls is available locally from RCCs.



A small hall or committee room is useful when catering for functions.

Adequacy of accommodation

Over half the respondent halls do not have adequate storage, although there has been a slight improvement since 1988. Lack of storage reduces the use of a hall, because, either the main hall becomes lined with equipment, or another meeting room (usually the committee room) becomes used as a store. Activities requiring bulky storage may simply not be accommodated (such as a youth club, table tennis, play group, amateur dramatics, short mat/carpet bowls and other sports).

B23. Are any of the hall's facilities inadequate for their purpose (except storage)?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	1,188	36.1	33.8
No	1,595	48.5	

Inadequate/lacking facilities included:

	Count
Kitchen	372
WCs	250
WCs- no disabled	228
WCs - none	4
Hall too small	108
Disabled facilities	105
Stage	99
Heating	98
Committee Room	73
Changing rooms	65
Car park/access	68

Other common problems included:

Damp building, poor floor, inadequate acoustics and/or sound insulation, electrics poor, everything too old, hall collapsing or dangerous, poor equipment.

Unfortunately storage is, like car parks and floors, often a low priority for funders. It is often the first thing to be cut when funds for improvements are not sufficient.

Storage can make a big difference to the use and viability of a hall and, therefore, needs to be given higher priority by funders.

Kitchens and WCs are the other facilities that are most commonly inadequate. As a high standard in these facilities is now demanded under licensing and food safety legislation, funders need to target these halls as a matter of priority.



Barkway Village Hall in Hertfordshire was re-vitalised by its renovation.

B24. If your hall has any special architectural features, please describe/explain them.

214 (6.4%) halls listed special features.

The response to this question was lower than in 1988, when 415 halls (14.7%) responded.

Special architectural features

The most common features described were open ceilings with exposed beams (45 halls). Other features were typical of old schools and churches such as belfries, gothic windows, clock towers and stained glass.

Three halls recorded that they have murals. Other interesting features included: balconies, tithe barns, an award for fitting in with an adjacent Lutyens studio, a bronze statue, fire places, gas lamps, an old orangery, pipe organ chamber, spire and wooden pillars.

Equipment

Information about equipment that is available at individual village halls is available from county Rural Community Councils, some of which produce local directories about village halls and similar premises available for hire.

Information was also sought about quantities of chairs, tables, cutlery and crockery.

Changes since 1988 include an increase in the proportion of halls with fridges (35% to 63%) and public telephones (14% to 22%). The latter are often requested by playgroups in case of emergency. There has also been a fall in use of P.A. systems (20% to 14%).

E1. Do you have a:

	Count	%	1988
Kettle	3,123	94.9	94.4
Cooker/ microwave	2,694	86.3	83.1
Urn	2,540	77.2	74.4
Fridge	1,984	63.5	35.1
Piano	1,862	56.6	
Black-out	737	22.4	26.9
Projection screen	460	14.0	
P.A. system	446	13.5	20.4
Sound equipment	360	10.9	
Television	127	3.9	
Slide Projector	83	2.5	2.4
Overhead projector	82	2.5	
Film Projector	25	0.8	1.4
Public telephone	722	21.9	13.6
Hearing Loop	224	7.2	
Photocopier	200	6.1	
Computer	122	3.7	
Window locks	1,177	37.7	
Fire alarm	929	29.7	
Smoke alarms	741	23.7	
Intruder alarm	422	12.8	
Other	123	3.7	

Over a third of halls now have some security measures, reflecting vulnerability to vandalism and theft. In some cases insurers have required security measures because of repeated problems.

Although provision of a refrigerator appears a useful facility for halls, if it is only used for occasional events, it must be turned on the day before to bring it to the correct temperature before use.



Upton Snodsbury village hall in Worcestershire has been completely rebuilt to provide up-to-date facilities for the local community. This has been funded by ACRE's 21st Century Halls Millennium Commission Project.

Chapter 3

Management and Administration

"We find recruiting officers is becoming harder because of the extra demands being made on them." Survey respondent.

In order to provide a picture of how village halls are run the survey asked questions about charity registration, the management committee, licences, Health and Safety and staffing. Trusteeship was clearly the subject of some confusion and is explained here. Some suggestions about good practice are also given for management committees to consider.

C1. Is the Hall a Registered Charity?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,678	85.8	83.3
No	391	12.5	

Charitable Status

86% of respondent village halls and similar community facilities serving rural areas, are charities. The halls that are not charities tend to be either parish council run halls (generally called Parish or Town Halls), local authority-run day centres or youth centres. There has been a slight rise in the proportion of registered charities over the last ten years, which may be because the Charities Act 1993 focused attention on the need to register.

All charitable halls must be registered with the Charity Commission.

If Yes, are the Holding Trustees:

	Count	%	1988
The Parish Council Official Custodian for Charities	705	21.1	22.6
Individuals	386	11.5	21.3
A church authority	1,502	44.9	29.6
Other	115	3.5	4.75
	140	4.3	7.3

The results of the second part of this question indicate widespread confusion about the roles and responsibilities of Holding/Custodian Trustees and Managing Trustees. These are explained below. The Charities Act 1993 has caused management committees to become aware of their responsibilities as Managing Trustees and some may have completed this question as if they were also the Holding Trustees. Despite the results, it is highly unlikely that there has been a move away from using the services of the Official Custodian for Charities, (an officer of the Charity Commission), towards having individual holding trustees.

Those with a church authority as custodian trustee are likely to include church halls, former church halls or church schools.

The Holding Trustees (or Custodian Trustee) are the legal owners of the charity's property and normally take no part in, and have no responsibility for, day-to-day management. This is usually carried out by a separate management committee, which are the Managing, or Charity, Trustees. The Official Custodian is ACRE's recommended choice of Custodian Trustee. The advantage is that he/she never needs replacing, can always be found at a known address and is too far removed to get involved in day-to-day management, but can give advice, and act in the correct manner, when asked to do so.

The roles and responsibilities of village hall trustees are clearly explained in ACRE's publications *Managing Your Hall* and *Village Halls Information Sheet 17, Trustees*. (See Appendix C.)

The Charity Commission and village hall advisers in the ACRE network need to address the current confusion among village hall committees about Trusteeship.

C2. Is the hall incorporated? (i.e. a limited company or industrial and provident society)

	Count	%
Yes	15	0.5
No	3,121	94.8

C3. Is there a separate management committee?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,602	79.0	97.1
No	577	17.5	

If Yes, who is the hall run by?

The Parish Council	176	5.3	10.7
The PCC	62	1.9	1.8
Community Association	195	5.9	
Representatives of users and elected members under a village hall trust	2,435	74.0	75.0
Other	102	4.3	9.9

C4. Does the committee meet?

	Count	%
Monthly	1,049	33.6
Bi-monthly	745	23.9
Quarterly	848	27.2
As and when required	367	11.8

C5. Is it difficult to get people to serve on the committee?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,046	62.2	53.3
No	1,044	31.7	

Incorporation

Very few village halls are incorporated. Incorporation has the advantage of offering trustees some legal protection against personal liability arising from their work as trustees. Usually, however, the activities and income/expenditure of most village hall committees make the expense and administrative cost of incorporation not worthwhile, although good insurance cover is essential. Larger organisations with licensed bars are likely to be those which are incorporated.

Management

The results are consistent with the 1988 survey, in indicating that around 75% of village halls are based upon one of the long established Model Trust Deeds for village halls. These establish a committee, representing user groups and elected members of the public, to carry out day-to-day management. The committee members are the managing (or charity) trustees of the charity.

To the best of ACRE's knowledge, management committees have not ceased to exist since 1988. Given the curious results about trusteeship in Question C1, the apparent 18% drop in management by committee identified in Question C3 is probably also the result of confusion among respondents.

At least 5% of respondents were parish council halls, either provided and run as part of their statutory function or as sole trustees of a charity. (The actual figure could be nearer the 10% recorded in 1988, because some may not use a parish council sub-committee).

Around 6% are run by a Community Association (CA), which differs from a village hall in having individual membership. This type of constitution is more often used in towns and urban areas as a means of creating a sense of 'belonging'. The buildings are more likely to be called Community Centres.

Around 2% would appear to be active church halls, run by the Parochial Church Council or a PCC committee. Other respondents included three WI halls and five residents' association halls.

A third of committees meet monthly, a figure which is consistent with the survey *Forgotten Resources* (see Appendix C). It is up to every committee to tailor frequency to need. Frequency may reflect level of use and may have to be adjusted when development is planned.

Over 60% of respondents have difficulty finding people to serve on the management committee and the jump of 9% in the last ten years is worrying.

The difficulty of recruiting volunteers is a problem of which the Government and local authorities should be aware, because public policy has probably contributed indirectly. Population change (which can result from the lack of affordable housing, employment and services in many rural areas), and the extra demands being made of volunteers as a result of recent legislation, were given by respondents as underlying reasons.

Committees faced with difficulty finding committee members need to ask themselves why. Simple measures may help, such as keeping meetings short, providing refreshments and warmth, setting up sub-committees which include people not on the full committee, making new members welcome, listening to their ideas, providing them with information about the hall and how to contact other committee members. Good communication and leadership are also important. An improvement project often stimulates new interest. Further ideas are given in ACRE's publication *Managing Your Hall*¹ and Village Halls Information Sheet 16, *Trustee Model Information Pack for new Village Hall Management Committee members*. (See Appendix C.) RCCs can also give advice to individual halls.

The survey *Forgotten Resources* (see Appendix C) found little evidence of difficulty in finding people to serve on the committee, although getting volunteers involved in the actual running of the building was another matter. Chapter 6 shows that a lack of community support is also a common problem. Cross-tabulation indicates that poor condition and poor use are only marginally more likely to make it difficult finding people to serve. Other reasons could include a lack of understanding that the hall is a charity dependent on voluntary support, and also of the importance of proper management. Much of the work involved is basic administration or routine maintenance, which is not exciting or glamorous, but has to be done.

The results do not necessarily mean that 60% of village halls are in jeopardy, although some do reach this point, when only the threat of losing the hall brings people forward. Many halls go through the 'doldrums' as personalities and activities change. However, new developments often bring new people with different skills onto committees. Retired people make an important contribution to running village halls, having more time to give. Many people serve for years and, although on the one hand this provides good stability,¹ on the other hand the injection of fresh blood and new ideas can benefit every hall, whether from incomers or established residents.

C6. Do the premises have a:

	Count	%	1988
P.E.L	2,410	77.2	77.8
Full On-licence	203	6.5	3.5
Social Club	182	5.8	5.8

Licences

Public Entertainment Licences (P.E.L) (also called Community Premises Licences) are the principal licences required by village halls, and similar community halls, and are held by 77%. They are required for all public entertainment involving music, singing, dancing or sports exhibitions. An annual licence, for which no fee is payable, is appropriate for most halls.

Some halls have no licence, either because they don't hold public entertainment, or because the premises do not come up to the required fire and hygiene standards, enforced by the district/unitary authority.

Only 12% of halls responding have a regular bar, most finding the use of occasional permissions adequate. Nevertheless, there would appear to be a small growth in halls selling alcohol under Justices' On-licences, perhaps associated with the closure of village pubs or the need to raise more income.

1. *Forgotten Resources?*, *The role of Community Buildings in Strengthening Local Communities*, Paul Marriott for Community Matters, 1997.

It can be tempting for committees to consider setting up a bar as a means of raising funds. However, charitable status can be infringed, and tax incurred, if a hall obtains a Justices' Licence to sell alcohol on the premises, unless the bar is only open within strict limits set down by the Charity Commission. There are other disadvantages, such as competition for local pubs, (which could close as a result), security problems and the loss of discretionary rate relief.

Where a bar is to be open regularly it is recommended that an independent social club run it, which covenant the profits back to the charity. RCCs and CTS Ltd., the trading arm of Community Matters, can advise committees about setting up such an arrangement.

C7 Is the property?

	Count	%	1988
Freehold	2,354	75.4	80.15
Leasehold	581	18.6	15.63

No response was given by 188 halls (6%)

Property

The results indicate that there has been a fall in the proportion of halls that are freehold, from 80% to 75%, in favour of leasehold. The explanation could be that old freehold halls are being replaced with new ones on leasehold land, with the proceeds from the sale of the old site/building being used to finance the building of a new hall.

6% of respondents did not know whether their hall is freehold or leasehold. RCC village hall advisers need to check that these halls have copies of their Deeds and understand their position.

Parish councils and other local authorities have power to grant a long lease for village hall purposes at below market value. Where a new hall is built on a local playing field, it can also be an opportunity to provide changing facilities for sports use.

Sale of the old site can be the only way of financing the building of a new hall, where there is insufficient grant aid. The Charity Commission requires, however, that a fund is built up to replace the assets spent on a leasehold hall, so the charity maintains its asset base in the long term. It is therefore important to obtain the Commission's advice first.

C8. Is your hall registered for VAT?

	Count	%
Yes	199	6.0
No	2,890	87.8

Cross-tabulation shows that a third (64) of the halls registered for VAT are run by parish/ town councils.

VAT

These results show that very few charitable village halls are registered for VAT. Income and expenditure is normally below the registration threshold. The added work involved in making VAT returns for the amount that could be reclaimed do not normally merit voluntary registration. The exception can be where a regular bar is run.

VAT became a major problem for village halls carrying out improvements and extensions in 1984, when it was extended to such building work. ACRE's Village Halls' Forum, and many village halls, have lobbied for relief but this has been unsuccessful. In 1989, using the results of the 1988 survey, The Village Halls' Forum persuaded the EC and British Government to continue to allow the building of new village halls and community centres free of VAT. This has been invaluable to communities that have built new halls since then. In 1998 ACRE recommended to the Chancellor's Review of Charity Taxation that a special VAT refund scheme be introduced for charitable village hall extensions, major repairs and improvements.

C9. Is the main hall a no smoking area?

	Count	%	Devon
Yes	1,075	32.7	33.0
No	2,080	63.2	

C10. How often is your kitchen used for food preparation other than tea & biscuits?

	Count	%
Often	452	14.5
Occasionally	2,123	68.0
Never	493	15.8

C11. Is the hall registered as 'food premises' with the Environmental Health Department?

	Count	%
Yes	979	29.7
No	2,058	62.5

C12. Do you have any (written) policies on:

	Count	%
Health & Safety	574	17.4
Equal Opportunities	224	6.8
Risk Assessment	189	5.7

Health and Safety

The introduction of 'No Smoking' in the main hall, which is the main entertainment space, has been controversial for some halls. It has gone hand-in-hand with more stringent fire safety regulations and a third of respondents have introduced this policy.

The majority of halls, 68%, are used only occasionally for food preparation and 62% are not registered as food premises. Usually, where food is provided, it is prepared at home.

The Food Safety Act (1990) and the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 have brought tougher new hygiene standards for village halls, and similar community premises, despite the fact that the majority are used only occasionally for food preparation.

ACRE has worked with the Department of Health and local authority environmental health officers to achieve a set of standards appropriate to the occasional catering carried out in most village halls and these are given in *ACRE Village Halls Information Sheet 20* (see Appendix C).

The new standards have, nevertheless, required many village hall committees to improve their kitchen and toilet facilities (see Chapter 5). In some cases, this has necessitated rebuilding part of the hall, or even triggered the complete replacement of the hall. Working closely with the ACRE network and recognising the extent of the problem, the Rural Development Commission introduced a grant scheme to help halls comply. This has helped alleviate the urgent difficulty that some committees faced.

The problems associated with the new Health and Safety standards informed ACRE's contribution to the Department of Trade and Industry Initiative aimed at reducing red tape for small businesses and voluntary organisations. This recommended that a *small organisations' litmus test* be applied when drafting new legislation and regulations. It is recommended that all Government departments should apply this when drafting new regulations, in order to avoid placing inappropriate requirements on volunteers running small charities, such as village halls.

Only 17% of respondent halls have written policies on Health and Safety, and fewer still, 7%, on Equal Opportunities.

Village hall committees need to look at the benefits of introducing Health and Safety, Risk Assessment and Equal Opportunities policies. Written policies on Health and Safety and Risk Assessment are now recommended because village hall committees have obligations towards the public and employees under Health and Safety legislation. The process of drawing up such policies enables potential risks to be identified and appropriate instructions to be issued to staff and volunteers.

Funders increasingly look for Equal Opportunities policies when considering grant applications. For village halls, and similar charities, whose trusts specifically oblige them to provide facilities for the whole community, this can seem superfluous, but the low level of provision for disabled people shows this is not the case. The process of drawing up an

Equal Opportunities policies can be a useful opportunity to discuss how more effort can be made to attract people not currently using the hall and ask them why they are not doing so. People to target include young people, disabled or infirm people and those from ethnic minorities, of whom there may be very few and who may, therefore, feel particularly isolated in rural areas.

Being welcomed to join activities can bring a huge improvement in the quality of life for an isolated individual and, in turn, bring their active support. Some activities appeal to all ages and abilities, and are particularly good at bringing the community together, such as short mat bowls, drama, arts, crafts and computing.

C13. What, if any, staff do you employ?

	F/T	P/T	Volunteer
Cleaner	1.4	56.1	10.8
Caretaker	4.5	29.8	11.2
Warden/ Manager	0.5	1.1	1.8
Bar Staff	0.7	2.8	8.0
Totals	7.1	89.8	31.8

Responses are given in percentages. Other staff included: bookings clerks, secretary/administrators, gardeners, maintenance staff.

Do you have a written:

		Count	%
Job Description	Yes	977	29.7
	No	1,877	57.0
Contract of Employment	Yes	575	17.5
	No	2,197	66.7

Staffing

The vast majority of village halls operate on a very small scale, employing either a part-time or voluntary cleaner, or caretaker, or both. Only 5.9% have full-time staff for this purpose. (The figures total more than 100% because some use a combination.) Very few, 23, have bar operations big enough to employ full-time staff. Less than a third of respondent halls had written job descriptions, which is very low.

The small proportion with wardens are probably town Community Centres, which in some areas qualify for local authority paid staff, or parish/town council-run facilities.

All full-time, and many part-time staff, employed at village halls are required to have Contracts of Employment. ACRE Village Halls Information Sheet 22 sets out the legal requirements and contains specimens appropriate for village and community halls. (See Appendix C.)

It is recommended that every employee is provided with a written job description outlining their duties. This is particularly important where staff are unsupervised, which is the case in most village halls, and helps to avoid dispute. It can also be helpful for volunteers, so that the extent of what is expected of each person is mutually understood.

Chapter 4

Finance

"For many community buildings, finding the running costs of the building has always been, and continues to be, a struggle". Paul Marriott, Forgotten Resources, 1997.

"As a committee we feel the VAT we have to pay on improvements and repairs is unfair. It is hard enough raising funds for the work alone."
Survey respondent.

The survey provides an opportunity to forecast the demand for capital grant aid for improvements in the years to come, and so assist funders. An indication of trends in grant giving and the effect of grant aid on the use and viability of halls are also given. The results show that the National Lottery has not replaced local authorities as the key source of capital grant aid for village halls. Information about running costs, sources of income and voluntary help also provides a measure of the tremendous amount of fundraising and voluntary work which finances the running of village halls.

DI. What have been your running costs, including maintenance but excluding major repairs, for the last 3 years?

Costs £	1995/96 Count %	1996/97 Count %	1997/98 Count %
Up to 1,000	668 20.3	636 19.3	617 18.7
1,001-2,000	620 18.8	603 18.3	578 17.6
2,001-3,000	413 12.5	433 13.2	398 12.1
3,001-4,000	278 8.4	305 9.3	309 9.4
4,001-5,000	236 7.2	209 6.3	203 6.2
5,001-10,000	459 13.9	505 15.3	500 15.2
over 10,000	231 7.0	250 7.6	253 7.7

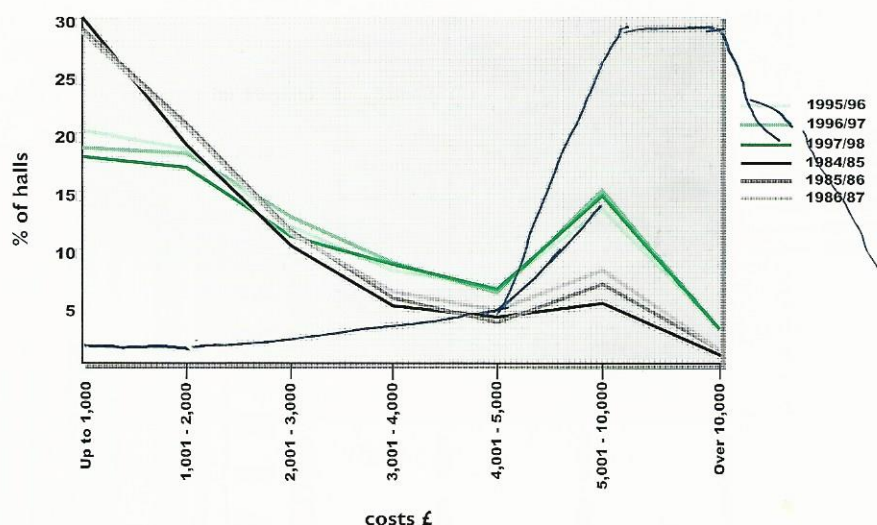
Total response 85%-88%

Running costs

The results show how economical village halls are to run, which is thanks to an enormous amount of work by volunteers. 64% have running costs under £5,000 p.a. 79% fall within the definition of small charities, with running costs below £10,000 p.a. Predictably, costs have risen in the last 10 years. But 37% still have running costs below £2,000 p.a., despite inflation.

Cross-tabulation with other questions shows that halls with lower running costs tend to be less well used and less likely to have a bar.

Running costs 1984/87 and 1995/8

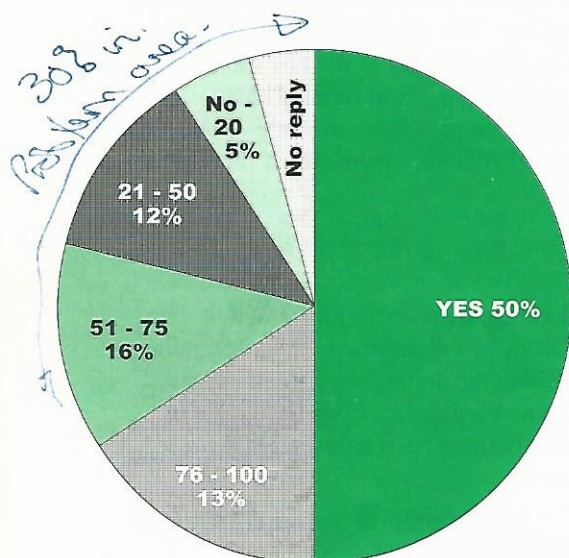


D2. Do your hire charges cover running costs?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	1,512	48.4	44.17
No	1,552	47.1	

If not, what proportion of costs do they cover:

	Count	1998	1988
Up to 20%	170	5.2	3.6
21-50%	405	12.3	13.4
51-75%	536	16.3	15.3
76-100%	421	12.8	12.5



Income from Hire Charges

Less than half the respondent halls cover running costs from hire charges, although it appears that slightly more halls are doing so than in 1988. Nearly a fifth of the respondents cover less than half their running costs from hire charges.

Cross-tabulations indicate that those halls which cannot cover costs from hire charges depend to a great extent on fundraising and voluntary maintenance just to keep going. This can be a big drain on volunteers and prevent a committee from considering the question of how the hall can best meet the needs of the community.

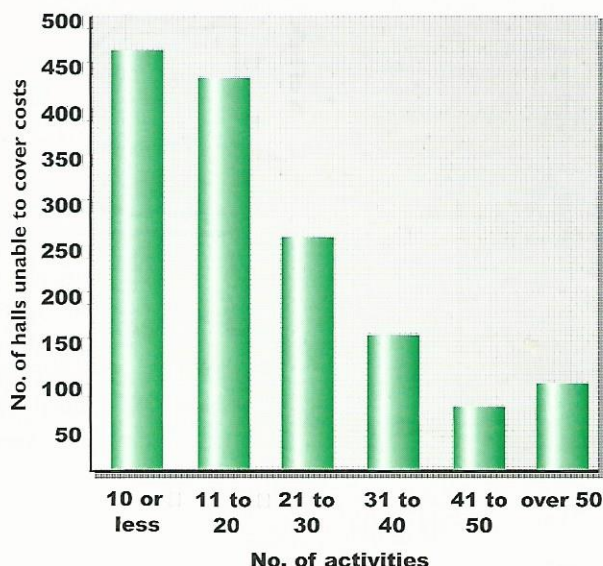
The following chart shows that increased use improves ability to cover costs. Quite small changes in use can have a substantial effect on viability. Chapter 5 shows that some key users of village halls, such as playgroups, have declined in the last ten years, which is a worrying trend. Such losses are only now beginning to affect village hall accounts and cannot be measured here. New activities can be the turning point for some halls and there is anecdotal evidence that this is true of carpet bowls. After the last survey, the Carnegie UK Trust (see Appendix D for address) introduced a new fund to assist halls with the purchase of equipment for new activities. 76% of the halls that have received these grants report increased use, showing that this policy has been successful.

Keeping costs down, providing financial support and 'help in kind' is essential to maintain the viability of village and community halls. This is an area in which local authorities, Government, utilities and other organisations (such as the Performing Rights Society) have a key role to play.

Cross-tabulations indicate:

- that those not covering costs from hire charges are:
 - far more likely to be fundraising to cover their costs
 - slightly more likely to have maintenance work carried out by volunteers.
 - more likely to be in poor condition
- that ability to cover costs improves directly with use.
- Halls more likely to cover costs from hire charges:
 - have been built since 1980
 - have a stage.

Effect of use on viability



D3. Do you need to fundraise to cover running costs?

	Count	%
Yes	1,668	48.5
No	1,347	43.1

D4. Do you receive regular financial support towards running costs from your:

	Count	%	1988
Parish Council	959	29.1	27.5
District Council	112	3.4	4.7
County Council	95	2.9	2.6
Other	131	4.0	7.4

Other sources included local charities and (for church halls) the church.

D5. How much has been raised by voluntary fundraising in the last three years?

Amount £	1995/96		1996/97		1997/98	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Less than 500	820	26.3	749	24.0	739	23.7
501-1,000	631	20.2	645	20.7	622	19.9
1,001-2,000	532	17.0	587	18.8	533	17.1
2,001-3,000	180	5.8	175	5.6	210	6.7
3,001-4,000	73	2.3	72	2.3	89	2.8
over 4,000	138	4.4	166	5.3	175	5.6

Fundraising to cover costs

Almost half of the respondents are fundraising regularly to cover their running costs

Financial support

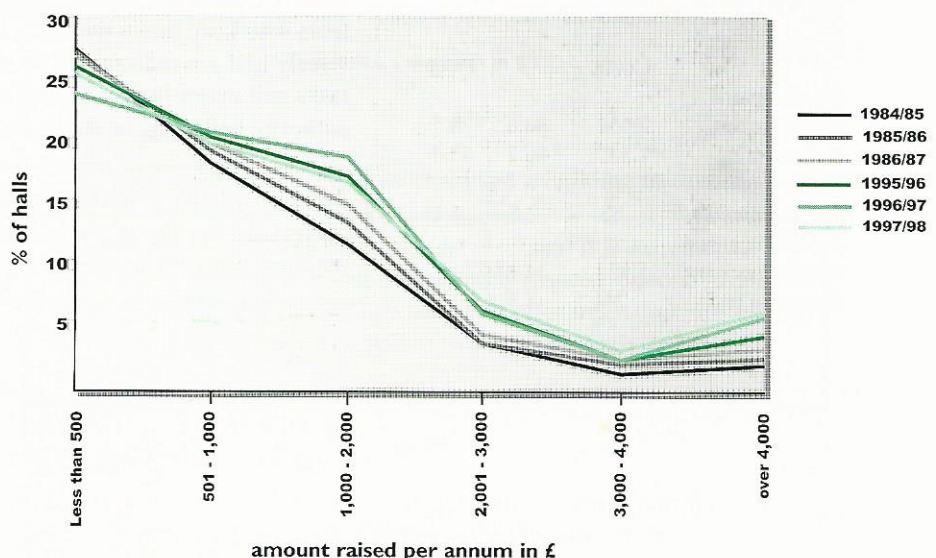
Regular financial help is very important in keeping village and rural community halls going, and 35% receive regular financial help with running costs from local authorities. Many of these halls are also fundraising. Parish/town councils are the principal source of regular support, helping just under a third of halls.

It is not uncommon for a village hall committee to find itself in a vicious circle: poor condition leading to poor use, which leads to low income, heavy reliance on volunteers, difficulty in attracting people to join the committee, difficulty raising funds, leading to poor repair, and so on. Regular financial support from the parish or town council can make a big difference to the condition and use of a hall, arresting that vicious circle of decline and more councils should be encouraged to provide such assistance.

Fundraising

At least 76% of respondents were fundraising each year. The graph shows that over the last ten years the amount raised each year has risen. More halls now raise between £1,001 and £2,000 p.a. and over £4,000 p.a., while fewer raise less than £500 p.a. There is also great stability in the pattern of fundraising, showing how much this is 'part and parcel' of running village halls. Those raising £2,000 or more are probably fundraising for a building project, as it can be difficult for a community to sustain a high level of fundraising over a long time without a target. For regular fundraising smaller amounts are more achievable.

The total amount raised each year by respondent halls is in the region of £3 million, indicating that, for around 9,000 rural halls, the current level of fundraising could be around £7.5 million per year.



D6. Do you have a planned repair and maintenance:

		Count	%
Programme	Yes	1,208	36.7
	No	1,782	54.1
Budget	Yes	911	27.7
	No	1,944	59.1

D7. Do you receive rate relief?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,251	76.6	81.0
No	328	10.0	

If so, what level of relief?

	Count	%	1988
50%	119	3.6	22.1
75/80%*	449	13.6	6.6
100%	1,919	58.3	48.7
Other	49	1.5	1.3
No reply	756	23.0	

*Mandatory charitable rate relief was raised from 50% to 80% in 1988. In the 1988 survey the figure used was 75%.

D8. Which of the following jobs are usually carried out by volunteers?

	Count	%	1988
Small repairs/ routine maint.	2,652	80.6	78.5
Redecorating	1,539	46.7	44.7
Major repairs/ Improvements	83	2.5	4.1
All maintenance except specialist	1,122	34.1	
Specialist tasks	241	7.3	

Budgeting for repair and maintenance

Around a third of the respondents plan ahead for repairs and maintenance.

Given that the building is the essential ingredient of a village or community hall, it is essential that it is properly maintained. The preparation of an annual budget and a 3-5 year work programme helps committees to plan fundraising, set hire charges correctly and fit work around use. It also helps when seeking grants, to show funders that the building is properly maintained.

Rate relief

One of the principal benefits of charitable status is eligibility for mandatory rate relief of 80%, and up to 20% more at the discretion of the district/unitary authority.

There has been a welcome 10% increase in the proportion of halls receiving 100% rate relief since 1988. This is a cost-effective means of local authority support for village and community halls, which makes a substantial difference to their viability.

Those receiving no relief are likely to be run by local authorities, which are not eligible for rate relief. The 'other' responses may include halls with non-charitable users with their own accommodation, such as doctor's surgeries and social clubs. These are not eligible for mandatory relief, but may receive discretionary relief.

Local authorities are able to make a blanket policy of granting full relief, but not a blanket policy of refusing it, which means that each case must be treated on its merits. Analysis of the figures by district, indicates that 26 of the 235 districts covered by the survey seem less likely to grant full relief than their neighbours. These authorities need to be encouraged to re-assess each case.

Voluntary help

80% of respondent halls have routine maintenance and small repairs usually carried out by volunteers. The results confirm that it is volunteers who keep down the costs of running village and community halls. Nearly half are redecorated by volunteers. In a few cases, specialist tasks and major improvements are also carried out by volunteers. Local authority halls may be those that receive less practical help.

One of the halls which kindly piloted the survey form has its own 'Direct Labour Force', a team of volunteers who organise the hall's maintenance programme.

D9. For what approximate sum is your hall insured for total rebuilding?

£	Count	%	1988
Not insured	28	0.9	
Up to 50,000	207	6.6	25.3
50,001-75,000	266	8.5	15.7
75,001-100,000	359	11.5	15.3
100,001-125,000	292	9.3	8.6
125,001-150,000	297	9.5	6.3
150,001-200,000	399	12.8	6.3
200,001-250,000	273	8.7	7.5
over 250,000	554	17.7	
No reply	448	14.3	

The total sum insured for 2,648 halls is £410,637,500 giving a mean insurance valuation of £155,075.

In 1988 the total sum insured for halls responding was approximately £187.6 million, giving a mean value of just over £75,000.

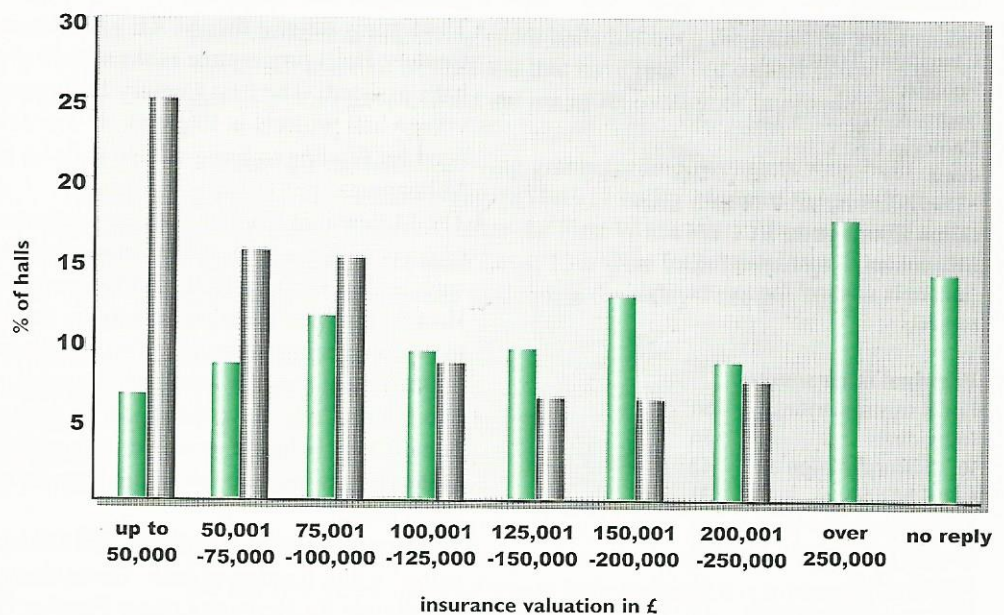
Insurance

The results and chart show a marked rise in the insurance valuation of village and community halls in rural areas, with a much higher proportion valued at more than £150,000. The average value of £155,000 is more than double that of ten years ago.

This reflects not only the huge escalation in building costs, but also the increase in standards demanded of new halls. The difference will also be reflected in insurance premiums.

The figures also indicate that the total capital value of the 8,500 or so village halls, and similar rural community buildings, could be around £1.3 billion, plus the value of their land. This is a huge resource by any standards, most of it charitable, which must receive proper maintenance and investment.

The true cost of building a modern village hall or community centre is not widely appreciated. Those insured for less than £100,000 would be well advised to check their rebuilding value. (see ACRE Village Halls Information Sheet 4, Appendix C).



D10. Is your rebuilding insurance index-linked?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,347	75.2	64.9
No	273	8.7	5.5

75% of respondent halls have index-linked rebuilding insurance.

The building is a village hall's biggest asset and it is extremely important trustees ensure that it is properly insured. Special insurance policies are available for village halls that offer index-linking, and any hall without an index-linked policy would be well advised to consider them.

D11. Have you been awarded grants towards improvements/ extensions/ rebuilding in the last five years from: (tick all that apply)

	Count	%	1988
Lottery Funds:			
NLCB	249	7.6	-
21st Century Halls	68	2.1	-
The Sports Council	59	1.8	3.47
Millennium Comm.	40*	1.2	-
The Arts Council	35	1.1	-
Heritage Lottery	16	0.5	-
All Lottery funds	467	14.3	

Statutory sources:			
District/Borough Council	1,543	47.0	47.2
Parish Council	1,307	39.7	38.7
County Council	751	22.8	27.2
Rural Development Commission	456	13.9	2.0

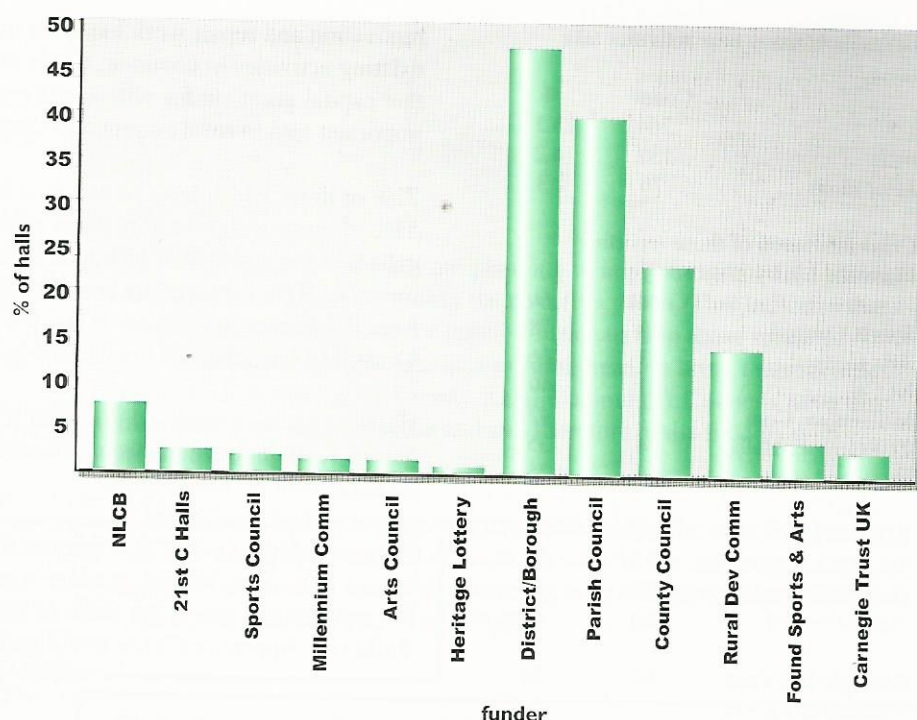
Charitable Trusts:			
Foundation for Sports & Arts	120	3.6	
Carnegie UK Trust	83	2.5	
*This figure includes 14 halls from Cornwall, where the RCC ran a Millennium Commission funded 'umbrella scheme' for community projects.			

Principal other sources:			
Local trusts/charities	156		
Individuals	56		
RCCs/Rural Action	42		
Local businesses	31		
Local organisations	25		
Lloyds/TSB Fdn	24		
Europe	11		
National charities/trusts	19		
40 national/international companies had also supported projects.			

Sources of Grant Aid

The following points can be drawn from the results and chart overleaf:

- Despite the advent of the National Lottery local authorities are still the most widespread source of grant aid for capital improvements. District and parish councils still assist the same numbers of projects as before the introduction of the National Lottery.
- County Councils have helped a smaller proportion of halls and analysis by county shows a wide variation in county council support. This fits with information collected by ACRE, which has shown a gradual withdrawal, and reduction, of some county budgets in the face of financial pressure.
- The National Lottery is not replacing local authorities as a source of funding. Indeed local authorities are an important source of partnership funding, in order to enable halls to qualify for Lottery grant aid.
- The picture may be changing, as the National Lottery Charities Board (NLCB) grant making themes were, until recently, inappropriate for multi-purpose community halls. At the time of the survey the NLCB had just begun to award grants through its 'Improving People's Living Environment' theme. It had yet to announce its first grants under the new 'Community Involvement' programme, for which village and community halls are eligible. The indications are that applications to this programme regionally have been heavily dominated by community buildings.
- The figures suggest that ACRE's Millennium Commission funded 21st Century Halls programme ranks second to the NLCB in numbers of halls assisted. The 21st Century Halls programme has funded 167 village hall projects in England. It was developed because of the huge need for funding to bring village halls up to standard for the Millennium.
- The Millennium Commission has supported a considerable number of projects with very substantial sums, both directly and through projects such as 21st Century Halls and Cornwall RCC's Millennium project. However, projects funded directly by the Millennium Commission had to be outstanding in design. This meant that many ordinary village hall improvement projects were unsuccessful.
- The Sports Council would appear to have assisted a smaller proportion of halls than before it took over responsibility for distribution of Lottery funds, despite the fact that sports are dominant activities in many halls.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council Lottery Funds have helped a tiny fraction of halls. Given that at least 34% of village halls are eligible for Heritage Lottery Funding (being either in Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings or Memorial Halls) it is surprising that only 0.5% have received grants from this source.
- The Rural Development Commission introduced two grant schemes for village halls, as a result of the last survey, and has also increased funding for ACRE's Village Halls Loan Fund. As a result it has become a significant source of funding and assisted more halls than all the Lottery Boards together. Its £1million p.a. grant fund is nevertheless over-subscribed and needs to be increased.
- The Foundation for Sport and the Arts, and the Carnegie UK Trust have each helped significant numbers of halls, albeit with smaller sums targeted for specific purposes. These have, nonetheless, been very important in developing the use of village halls.



D12. What was the work for?

	Count	%
A New Hall	195	5.9
Major renovation/ improvement	1,497	45.5
Extension	398	12.1
Equipment	367	11.1
Fixtures/fittings	485	14.7
Other	196	6.0

Other work included energy efficiency, heating system replaced, facilities for disabled people, external improvements e.g. car park, drive, play area, sports field, purchase of hall.

D13. What were the reasons for the work?

	Count	%
Condition of old hall	1,182	35.9
Health & Safety requirements	639	19.4
Old hall too small	173	5.3
Had no hall	31	0.9
Development of facilities	1,081	32.8
Other	103	3.1

Has use of the hall increased since then?

	Count	%
No reply	1,245	37.8
Yes	1,003	30.5
No	1,044	31.7

Uses of Grant Aid

Renovating and improving older halls has been the focus for most recent work. Almost half of the halls that have received capital grants in the last five years have carried out major renovation or improvements.

Almost half the halls receiving grants for improvements were built before 1930, the bulk being 1851-1914 halls. Many of the new halls have replaced halls built after the First World War. Although most halls being extended were older halls, 13% were built in the 1980s, which were presumably already inadequate for today's needs.

Between 50% and 66% of respondents have carried out improvements in the last five years, many of which have included a combination of work. Almost 60% of those halls carrying out work were doing so because the hall was in a poor condition, and 53% to develop their facilities. Almost a third were obliged to do so in order to meet Health and Safety requirements. Half of those halls carrying out Health and Safety work were more than 70 years old i.e. pre-1930 halls.

The cost effectiveness of capital grant aid

Almost half of the halls undertaking improvements report that use has since increased, usually by 1-5 new activities. Given that much

If Yes, how many new activities take place?

	Count	%
1-5	764	23.2
6-10	137	4.2
11 or more	76	2.3

Cross tabulation of those reporting increased use by grant source:

	Count	%
Sports Council	46	78
Arts Council	23	66
NLCB	121	49
Millennium Com	17	42
21st Century Halls	24	35
Heritage Lottery	4	25
RDC	266	58
County Council	393	52
District Council	723	47
Parish Council	604	46
Carnegie UK Trust	63	76
Foundation for Sport & Arts	90	75

DI4. Do you have any major improvements or repairs planned in the next five years?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,000	64.0	64.2
No	958	30.7	

If Yes, tick all that apply. (Results exclude Devon, where different categories were used)

	Count	%	1988
Rebuilding	197	6.3	4.6
Extension	537	17.2	15.8
Alteration/ improvement	757	24.2	8.8
Major repair	281	9.0	8.1
Major renovation/ Refurbishment	705	22.6	15.5
New roof	349	11.2	11.5
New heating	428	13.7	12.3
Facilities for disabled people	665	21.3	
Other	227	7.3	22.1

(The main 'other' items given were smaller repairs/improvements such as new car park, floor, kitchen modernisation, rewiring, replacement windows, staging. Land purchase and landscaping were also mentioned.)

Please give approximate cost, if known.

Approx. total cost	£81,092,851
No. of halls	1,273
Average cost	£63,702

renovation and repair work has been necessary simply in order to enable existing activities to continue, this is extremely encouraging. It shows that capital grant aid for village and community halls can be an important tool in rural community development.

72% of those which have built a new hall reported increased use, as did 57% of those with an extension or with new equipment. Increased use enhances the viability of village and rural community halls. The largest increases were achieved by grants given for sports and arts activities from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, the Sports Council and Arts Council of England and grants for equipment by the Carnegie UK Trust.

Halls which have received grant aid within the last five years are only half as likely to have inadequate facilities. They are also less likely to be dependent on fundraising.

It is a good idea to take the opportunity, when planning all improvements, to look ahead and consider what steps can be taken to improve the way the hall meets the needs of the community. *Plan, Design and Build* (see Appendix C) has much good advice to offer about this.

The survey reveals a high level of forward planning. As in 1988, 64% of respondent halls are planning major improvements. The results show a striking consistency with those ten years ago, particularly given the number of halls that have carried out improvements within the last five years.

The greatest demand is for alterations, improvements, major renovation and refurbishment (around 20% each), but a small percentage still need to be rebuilt, which is generally more costly. Many halls are planning a combination of work. Almost all of those with inadequate facilities are likely to be applying for a grant for improvement.

Although the focus for this work might appear to be the buildings, the difficulty of running and developing activities in inadequate buildings is usually the driving force for people involved in raising funds for improvements, even if the trigger was a building problem.



A Planning for Real exercise helps ensure the right facilities are provided.

The response to the same question in 1988 was:

Approx. total cost	£25.9 million
No. of halls	1,174
Average cost	£22,058

D15. Do you envisage applying for a grant for this work?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	2,075	60.4	48.5
No	338	10.3	

If Yes, (these figures exclude Devon)

Applied	547	16.6	
Within 2 yrs.	909	27.6	25.0
Within 5 yrs.	206	6.3	10.4

Please give amount of grant needed: Respondents to this question gave the following answers:

	Count	%	1988
Less than £5,000	438	13.3	8.9
£5,001 - £20,000	600	18.2	3.8
£20,001 - £50,000	247	7.5	
£50,001-£100,000	190	5.8	2.5
£101,000-£150,000	92	2.8	
£15001-£200,000	72	2.2	
over £200,000	88	2.7	

Total grant needed:	£73,236,500
Average grant needed:	£42,000
No. of halls:	1,728

In 1988 the total amount of grant needed by 421 halls in the next two years was £6.3 million.

60% of the respondent halls are planning to apply for grant aid for major improvements or repairs within the next five years. This indicates that there is still a strong need for public finance to help those running village halls, and similar facilities in rural areas, to bring their facilities up to modern standards. County Rural Community Councils have this information on their database and can therefore assist funders with forward planning.

Most of those halls planning improvements within the next five years will be looking for grant aid towards the cost. In the majority of cases this will be less than £20,000. However, over 400 respondents will be looking for grants in excess of £50,000.

Given that around 40% of the halls in rural England responded to the survey, the potential demand from rural halls in England alone, over the next five years, could be as high as £190million, or £35million p.a. at current prices. However, this figure excludes the 10,500 urban and suburban halls identified in *Forgotten Resources*, so it could be far higher.¹

Local authority provision for village halls has fallen from a figure of £5-£6million ten years ago. Comparable figures are no longer available, but ACRE estimates that it may now be around half that figure. In addition, the Rural Development Commission provides £1.1 million p.a. This indicates a very serious shortfall in funding for capital improvements for rural community halls of around £170 million over the next five years. The obvious sources for funding are the National Lottery Boards, each of which will need to carry out a serious review of their priorities and past performance in helping community halls, if they are to seriously meet this demand.

1. *Forgotten Resources?, The role of Community Buildings in Strengthening Local Communities*, Paul Marriott for Community Matters, 1997.

Chapter 5

Use of Village Halls

"The new hall has been operational for two years and is extremely well used, so much that it is overbooked on occasions". Survey respondent.

This chapter looks at the types of activities taking place in village halls, the level of use and changes since 1988. The commonest activities are listed here, and others are given in Appendix B, so that village hall committees can compare their hall with others, and look for ideas.

The key purpose of any community building is to provide a place where people can meet and carry out activities as a community. The effectiveness of a hall can be judged, in part, on its use. However, in small, rural communities the low population reduces the potential level of use. Even poorly-used halls are important in reducing isolation for the people they serve. By providing facilities locally, village and community halls contribute to sustainability, reducing car trips and keeping villages 'alive'.

Respondents were asked to give the nearest frequency of use to the activities listed below and to list others not given, using the following:
D = Daily, W = Weekly, M = Monthly, O = Occasionally

Ten most widespread activities				Ten most frequent users (where held)			
Activity	%	Freq	1988	Activity	%	Freq	1988
Private parties	93	O	90	Pre-school playgroup	37	D	43
Village hall cttee	88	M/O	87	Mothers and Toddlers	37	W	36
Public meetings	78	O	-	Keep Fit	37	W	39
Jumble sales/bazaars	7	O	79	Senior Citizens	42	W/M	50
Polling Station	75	O	69	Line Dancing	35	W	-
Parish Council mtg	75	M	73	Carpet Bowls	30	W	13
Wedding receptions	69	O	74	Youth Club	23	W	33
Dances	64	O	64	Badminton	19	W	23
Fairs/fetes	62	O	-	Aerobics	17	W	36
Discos	59	O	55	Bingo	30	W	32

Playing fields, play equipment and recycling banks attached to the hall were also used daily. The most widespread activities are not necessarily the most important uses.

Use of the Hall

Notes:

- 1.* denotes that the question was either not asked in 1988 or not recorded
- 2.< 3.6% denotes that the question was one of the most common recorded under 'other' activities in 1988, but recorded by fewer than 100 halls.
- 3.The most common frequency of each activity is given first.

	Total Count	Total %	1988 %	Frequency
Services:				
Parish Council meetings	2,488	74.6	72.6	M/O
Polling station	2,478	75.3	69.1	O
Luncheon Club	409	12.4	<3.6	W/M
Blood transfusion	226	6.7	5.2	O
Baby clinic	218	6.6	14.4	M/W
Day centre	198	6.0	<3.6	W
Doctor's surgery	179	5.3	7.3	W/D
Parish Council Office	167	5.1	*	D
Library	102	3.0	3.7	W
Chiropody	83	2.5	5.0	M
Post Office	70	2.1	1.1	W/D
Other clinic	57	1.7	2.1	M
Shop	49	1.5	*	O/D/W
Resource Centre/Telecottage	43	1.3	*	D/O
Job Vacancies Display	39	1.2	0.1	O/W
Meals on wheels	31	0.9	<3.6	W
Other	69	2.1	13.7	O

Social and Recreational:

Church/PCC events	1,709	51.9	4.7	O
Womens Institute	1,939	59	69.5	M
Senior citizens club	1,366	41.5	49.8	W/M
Pre-school playgroup	1,217	37	43.4	D (W)
Mothers & Toddlers	1,203	36.5	36.4	W
Bingo	996	30.3	32.1	W/O
Gardening Club	841	25.5	27.9	M
Youth Club	715	22.6	33.0	W
Religious services	531	16.1	*	O/W
Royal British Legion	359	10.9	<3.6	O
Dog training	355	10.8	<3.6	W
Bridge club	333	10.1	<3.6	W
Young Farmers	83	8.6	10.3	O/M
Social Club (with bar)	282	9.6	6.6	D/W/O
Mothers Union	219	6.7	<3.6	O/M
Young Wives	112	3.4	5.9	M
Other	338	10.3	36.4	O

The Arts:

Line dancing	1,140	34.6	*	W/O
Amateur dramatics	1,129	34.3	22.3	O/W
Art/craft exhibitions	1,001	30.4	<3.6	O
Ballroom dancing	648	19.7	11.0	W/O
Band practice	601	18.3	<3.6	O/W
Art classes	576	17.5	7.3	W/O
Old Time dancing	522	15.9	14.2	W/O
Flower arranging	503	15.3	<3.6	O/M
Ballet classes	483	14.7	15.8	W
Craft classes/club	348	10.6	<3.6	O/W
Film shows	341	10.4	20.0	O
Other arts	327	10.0	*	O/W
Sewing classes/club	305	9.3	<3.6	W/O
Art club	273	8.3	*	W
Choral Society	210	6.4	5.4	W/O
Upholstery club/classes	131	4.0	<3.6	W/O
Folk club	123	4.7	3.19	O/W
Bell ringers	97	2.9	2.4	O
Music lessons	95	2.9	<3.6	W/O

Educational:

Brownies	616	18.7	18.9	W
Local history classes/society	446	13.5	<3.6	O/M
Primary school	433	13.2	10.9	O/W/D
Sunday school	379	11.5	<3.6	W
Guides	308	9.4	11.6	W
Cubs	306	9.3	10.2	W
Scouts	272	9.3	7.8	W
Nursery school	237	7.2	<3.6	D
Rainbows	219	6.7	*	W
Beavers	196	6.0	<3.6	W
Other educational	192	5.9	*	O/W
Further education	164	5.0	22.5	O/W
Language classes	99	3.0	<3.6	W
Cookery	55	1.7	<3.6	O
Chess club	23	0.7	1.1	W/O

Sports:

Keep fit	1,207	36.7	38.9	W
Carpet bowls/short mat bowls	973	29.6	13.1	W
Badminton	632	19.2	22.9	W
Table Tennis	490	14.9	15.9	W/O
Aerobics	451	16.7	<3.6	W
Yoga	359	10.9	9.0	W
Karate	261	7.9	<3.6	W
Football training	206	6.3	<3.6	W
Other sports	199	6.0	16.4	O
Other martial arts	196	6.0	<3.6	W
Billiards/Snooker/Pool	189	5.7	Each <3.6	D/W
Darts	187	5.7	<3.6	O/W
Judo	147	4.5	4.9	W
Short tennis	111	3.4	<3.6	W
Rifle Club	29	0.9	0.8	W

Attached to hall:

Playing field	596	18.1	*	D
Football	439	13.3	13.0	W
Play equipment	398	12.1	13.7	D
Recycling bank	336	10.2	*	D
Cricket	241	7.3	8.6	W
Tennis	185	5.6	5.7	D/W
Bowls	145	4.4	*	D/W
Badminton court	94	2.9	*	W
Other attached	88	2.7	26.7	O
Netball	63	1.9	*	W
Squash court	9	0.3	*	D

General events:

Private parties	3,057	93.0	90.4	O/M
Village hall committee mtgs	2,893	87.8	87.1	O/M
Public meetings	2,581	78.4	*	O
Jumble sales/bazaars	2,543	77.0	79.2	O
Weddings	2,284	69.4	74.2	O
Dances	2,109	64.0	63.5	O
Fairs/fetes	2,023	61.5	*	O
Discos	1,926	58.5	55.2	O
Harvest supper	1,871	56.8	<3.6	O



A drop in use by playgroups has been the inadvertent result of increased nursery provision in schools.

Coffee mornings	1,787	54.4	43.9	O
Quizzes	1,586	48.2	<3.6	O
Concerts	1,315	40.0	39.7	O
Produce show	1,155	35.1	<3.6	O
Whist drives	1,148	35.0	45.4	O/W
50/50 auctions	603	18.3	23.2	O
Other general	185	5.6	28.9	O

Commercial uses:

One day sales	663	20.2	5.0	O
Charity car boot sales	605	18.3	<3.6	O
Company meetings/exhibitions	591	18.0	<3.6	O
Antique Fairs	510	15.5	13.8	O
Auctions	425	12.9	<3.6	O
Other commercial	74	2.2	18.4	O

Other users

A total of 203 other activities were recorded, which are listed in Appendix B. 311 different activities were recorded altogether, compared with 373 in 1988.

Key Users

The key users of village halls are still local community activities such as playgroups, mothers and toddlers, Parish Councils, Women's Institute, youth clubs, senior citizen's groups and, of course, the village hall committee itself. Other common activities include horticultural societies, amateur dramatics, line dancing, ballroom dancing, short mat bowls, badminton and church services or events. Some uses have been remarkably consistent (such as Brownies, horticultural societies and mothers and toddlers), so changes are significant.

This pattern of use underlines the importance of village halls and similar buildings in providing a venue for local activities which, by their very nature, can only take place within the community where they are easily accessible.

Key falls in use

Significant changes in the use of village halls have taken place since the 1988 Village Halls Survey. Although the variety of uses of many halls has increased, there has been a worrying drop in use by activities and services serving disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The following activities have declined since the 1988 survey:

Pre school playgroups	(From 43% to 37%)
Youth clubs	(From 33% to 23%)
Senior citizens clubs	(From 50% to 42%)
Women's Institutes	(From 70% to 59%)
Baby clinics	(From 14% to 7%)
Film shows	(From 20% to 10%)
Whist drives	(From 45% to 35%)



Short mat bowls have become much more widespread and have transformed some village halls.

Many of these activities are an important means of avoiding isolation for some of the most disadvantaged people in rural areas, particularly where there is inadequate public transport or none at all. Such people include babies and toddlers, teenagers, young people, mothers without cars, and the elderly or infirm.

Reasons for decline in use may include:

- Wider changes in society, in the rural way of life and the rural population, such as a predominance of 'incomers' who have not become involved in the local community. Also, the fact that more women are working, which means that fewer are available as daytime participants or leaders.
- The encouragement of state nursery provision has inadvertently led to the closure of many rural playgroups, by leaving too few children to make a playgroup viable. As playgroups are almost daily users of village halls, this is likely to have a significant effect on the income of many halls.
- A growing number of elderly people are frail and housebound. While many active newly retired people run community activities, some are less inclined to join activities specifically for elderly people.
- Lack of trained leaders willing to run youth clubs.
- Withdrawal or redirection of public funding for services, such as local Age Concern and Youth Services.

The fall in use of halls by baby clinics could be a significant loss for young mothers without private transport. These provide important opportunities for new mothers to meet others in similar circumstances, as well as for professional support. This is especially true in rural areas without adequate public transport to the nearest surgery or health centre. In some village halls, clinics are held at the same time as mother and toddlers to help improve communication and attendance.

Primary health care teams should address the decline in use for baby clinics and consider whether this is in the best interests of patients.

Use for occasional wedding receptions (an important source of income) is also less widespread, falling from 74% to 69%.

Increases in use

The good news is that overall use appears to have increased slightly. However, increases in some individual activities may be due in part to differences in recording. For example, a separate heading was given for Arts activities, which may have led to better recording. Falls in the 'other' categories result from the creation of new categories.

The following six uses have become considerably more widespread:

Line dancing - a new activity now using 35% of halls weekly	
Ballroom dancing	(from 11 to 20%)
Amateur dramatics	(from 22 to 34%)
Carpet bowls	(from 13 to 30%)
Coffee mornings	(from 44 to 54%)
One day sales	(from 5 to 20%)

The following activities also appear to be becoming more widespread:

Services

Day centres
Polling station

Arts

Art classes
Art club
Craft classes/club
Band practice
Art/craft exhibitions
Flower arranging

Social/Recreation

Religious services
Church/PCC events
Royal British
Legion
Bridge club
Dog training

Sports

Karate
Other martial arts
Aerobics

Educational

Beavers
Nursery Schools
Sunday School
Local History Rainbows

General events

Public meetings
Fairs/fetes
Harvest supper
Produce show
Quizzes

Commercial

Charity car boot sales
Auctions
Company meetings

Village Halls as multi-purpose village centres

There has been little increase in use for services, other than for polling stations, luncheon clubs and day centres. It had been hoped that this survey would have seen more widespread use of village halls as alternative venues for services, given the continuing closure of rural services such as shops and post offices. However, there may have been a marginal reduction in use for services such as Doctors' surgeries, chiropody practices and libraries. New services in village halls include shops, usually run as community ventures, and Resource Centres/telecottages, where communal information points and computer services are provided. The lack of development of services is disappointing because the ACRE Network has encouraged villages to consider providing alternative services in village halls. Also, the Rural Development Commission has backed this up with grant aid targeted at wider use.

There is considerable potential for primary health care teams and village hall committees to work together to create 'Healthy Living Centres' in village halls, as at Brockenhurst in the New Forest. Here, the local doctor and his colleagues 'prescribe' patients courses of activity, some of which involve physical exercise and community activities. These help to avoid isolation and provide mental stimulation, as appropriate. Some of the activities are based at the village hall, which has been suitably equipped, and the hall runs activities in which disabled and infirm people can participate.

There is tremendous potential for village halls, and similar rural community facilities, to provide alternative venues for services that would otherwise have to close. They can also provide local venues for visiting or outposted services, such as library information points,



Village halls provide excellent venues for community fairs.

particularly now that modern technology allows centrally held information to be accessed by telephone. A contribution to sustainability could be made reducing the need for car journeys. Accessibility to services could be improved, especially for those without private transport. Rural job seekers, for example, could access information about vacancies and 'sign on' locally, without the expense and difficulty of travelling to a Job Centre in a town. The co-operation and support of all authorities responsible for delivery of services in rural areas is essential if this potential is to be realised.

Meeting the community's needs and developing new activities

There is a danger that volunteers spend their limited energy and resources looking after the building, without ensuring that it meets the needs of the community. However, village hall committees can, and many do, provide a Forum where community needs are regularly discussed and action is taken. Paul Marriott¹ makes the point that the financial and practical problems in running a community building mean that success often becomes equated with survival, whereas success is more properly measured by whether community need is identified, and met, by the management committee.

Management committees, and others running village halls and similar community buildings, need to recognise the danger of expending all their energy and resources on looking after the building. Committees need to ensure that the building is meeting the needs of the community, be open to fresh ideas and opportunities, and do their best to communicate and consult with the local community. Active management committees are often the springboard for new activities and for community-wide events throughout the year. The Millennium offers a prime opportunity e.g. for celebrations and exhibitions about village history.

There are a number of measures a committee can take to explore the community's needs. For example, they can initiate a Village Appraisal, borrow sports equipment, hold 'taster evenings' for people to try out a new activity, and run activities which young people can join, welcoming them in. Rural Community Councils can provide advice and may be able to suggest sources of funding for new activities. The Carnegie UK Trust, for example, can assist with the purchase of equipment for new activities and the National Lottery Charities Board will fund measures to provide access for disabled people, and to help disadvantaged people.

F117. Approximately how many hours in total in a typical week is the hall in use?

	Count	%
10 or less	665	20.2
11-20	830	25.2
21-30	608	18.5
31-40	384	11.7
40-50	202	6.1
Over 50	289	8.8
No reply	314	9.4

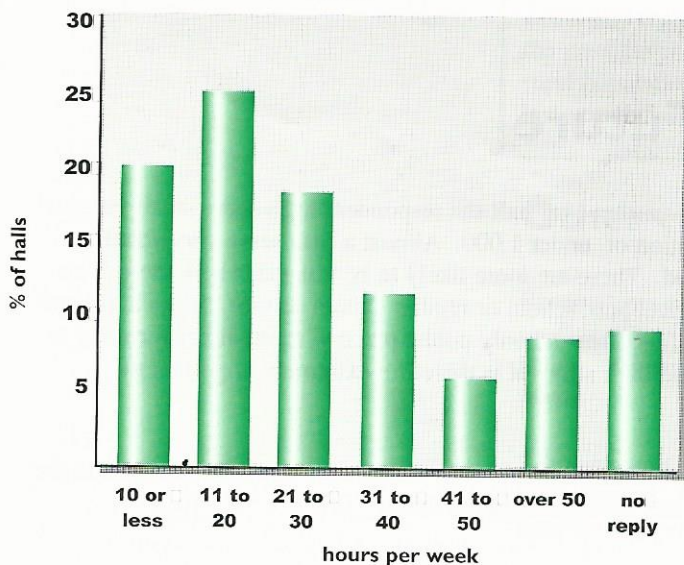
Level of use

The results and chart show that 45% of respondent halls are used at least 20 hours a week, which is on average 6-8 sessions per week or once per day. 45% are used less than this. A fifth of respondent halls were, however, typically used for 10 hours or less a week, i.e. less than 4 sessions of 2-3 hours. Fewer than 10% are used to capacity (3 sessions per day, or more with more rooms).

In 1988 the average number of activities per hall was 16. The average number of sessions in use was 235 per annum, or roughly 11 hours per week, compared with almost 20 hours per week in 1998, indicating that overall use has increased.

1. *Forgotten Resources?, The role of Community Buildings in Strengthening Local Communities*, Paul Marriott for Community Matters, 1997.

Weekly use in hours



There is a clear correlation between population size and use of halls, i.e. as population increases, so does use. Over half of the least well used halls serve very small villages of up to 300 people.

Cross-tabulations indicate that better-used halls are less likely to be in poor condition, have higher running costs and are less likely to be fundraising to cover running costs. Better used halls are also more likely to be newer or have been recently extended, have had grant aid for new equipment, be applying for a grant, have a larger main hall, and a second hall or committee room. Poorly used halls are more likely to have a very small main hall and no stage.

Improving a hall helps to improve use and, therefore, its financial viability. Many halls serving small villages are struggling to keep going and are most in need of outside help with improvements. Although it can be tempting for funders to target resources at larger communities, there is also a case for funds to be targeted at village halls serving smaller communities. Once improved, village halls are largely self-supporting.

F119. Are any activities excluded from using the hall?

	Count	%
Yes	1,028	31.2
No	1,705	51.8
No reply	559	17.0

If Yes, please state which and explain why.

Common exclusions and reasons include:

Commercial sales (246) - charity status
 Games/sports (170) - hall too small or possible damage
 Discos (154) - noise and vandalism
 Unsupervised parties (92) - noise/ damage
 Animal training/events (82) - hygiene
 Gambling, hypnotism, strip shows and indoor fireworks (36) - licensing regulations
 Band rehearsals (22) - noise
 Youth Clubs (21) - noise/vandalism
 Sale of alcohol (19) - hall's trusts.

Excluded activities

A third of the respondent halls exclude some activities. This may appear high, given that village halls should be open to the whole community. However, most exclusions are for legitimate reasons, for example, a fifth, 246, exclude commercial sales, in order to protect their charitable status (although occasional commercial use should not jeopardise charitable status).

Other reasons for excluding activities include the hall being too small, the proximity of neighbours and licensing regulations. Repeated vandalism and damage also makes committees wary of bookings for discos and parties (some charge hefty deposits in case of damage).

Sadly, 21 youth clubs and eight Young Farmers Clubs are excluded because of repeated damage. Often, it is not the members but outsiders or a minority, who have been excluded, who cause trouble. Good supervision is the key. Well-supervised clubs are a great benefit to young people in rural areas. Exclusion of these, therefore, needs to be a last resort if proper supervision cannot be achieved.

The charitable trust, under which most secular village halls operate, prevents them from discriminating on the grounds of religion or politics. 38 halls exclude political meetings of any kind. Some church halls exclude witchcraft, non-religious events, tarot reading and Sunday trading.

One reportedly excludes Over 60s Nude Bungee jumping, owing to its low roof!

9-6 small people
19.19% pop of England live
in rural
settlements.

Chapter 6

The Future

G1. What is the approximate population of the area served by your hall?

	Count	%	1988
Up to 300	609	19.5	20.5
301-600	668	21.4	22.0
601-1,000	451	14.4	15.9
1,001-2,000	479	15.3	16.6
2,001-4,000	454	14.5	9.4
4,001-10,000	291	9.3	8.9
over 10,000	57	1.8	

G2. Roughly what proportion of the population uses the hall?

	Count	%	1988
Up to 25%	1,883	57.2	44.7
26-50%	815	24.8	25.6
51-75%	202	6.1	9.2
76-100%	52	1.6	4.0
No reply	340	10.3	

G3. Do you have any immediate plans to develop the use of your hall or its role in the community?

	Count	%	1988
Yes	596	18.1	29.5
No	2,029	61.6	

If yes, please give details

G4. Does your hall suffer any recurrent problems?

		Count	%
Vandalism/ security	Yes	726	22.1
	No	1,977	60.1
Lack of support from the community	Yes	1,653	50.2
	No	1,166	35.4
Lack of support from the parish council	Yes	353	10.7
	No	2,193	66.6
Not used enough	Yes	1,537	46.7
	No	1,169	35.5

The results show that over half the respondent halls serve small villages with a population of under 1,000. Almost a fifth serve very small villages indeed. These are more likely to be villages where there is no shop, post office, pub, school or regular church service. In such villages the village hall is often the only public place to meet, either formally or informally, and their survival is therefore extremely important to local people.

Efforts were specifically made to include larger rural communities in the 1998 survey and the results reflect this.

Sadly, the results indicate that halls are used by fewer people. There has been a 12% rise in the proportion of halls used by less than a quarter of the population and a 6% drop in those used by 50% or more of the population. This may be associated with some of the changes in use, noted in the previous chapter, and with the ageing population in many rural areas. The previous survey established that around three million people use village halls and similar community facilities in rural England, which is around a third of the rural population.

Almost a fifth of respondent halls had plans to develop the use of the hall, or its role.

The details provided have been passed to RCCs.

Surprisingly, vandalism and security problems, which are widely perceived to be problem areas, were recorded by only a fifth of the respondents. The most significant problem, suffered by half the respondent halls, was the lack of support from the community, with insufficient use a close second. On the positive side, only 10% report a lack of support from the parish council as a problem.

The problems faced by rural community halls differ from those found in the sample survey of urban and rural halls for *Forgotten Resources*¹. This could be a symptom of changes in the rural population, described in chapter 5, and because young people have been forced to move away by lack of affordable housing and jobs. The closure of schools also means young families do not move in and the legacy of the two World Wars has reduced the numbers of two generations in some villages.

1. *Forgotten Resources?*, The role of Community Buildings in Strengthening Local Communities, Paul Marriott for Community Matters, 1997.

Local and regional housing and planning authorities need to be aware of the possible consequences for rural community life of changes in the rural population. They should actively seek, through their policies, to keep rural communities active.

Other comments

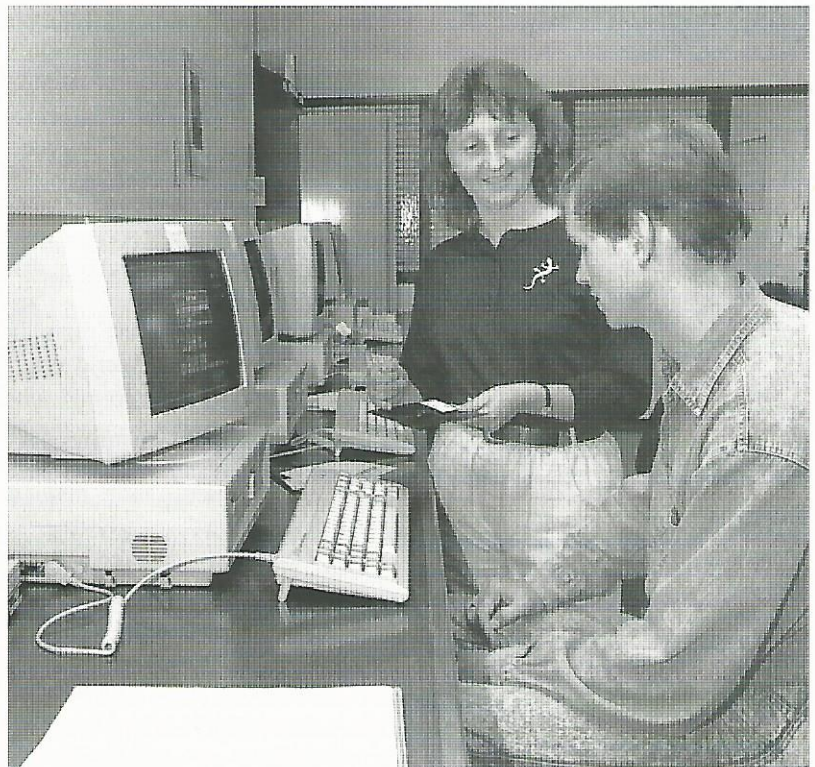
Respondents were invited to make other comments, ask for advice or provide extra information, all of which have been passed to RCCs for action. A few examples in their own words cover many of the comments made:

"If it were not for the active participation and expertise of newcomers to the village the hall would probably have closed by now, although one veteran villager carries out much of our maintenance work."

"We are lucky to have (The RCC village halls adviser) who is absolutely marvellous with his advice."

and finally:

"Our village hall is a very important part of a very rural community with very little public transport. Every one in the village wants the hall to continue but very few want to contribute to the management of it!"



IT Resource Centres are a new and growing use which could herald one of the future roles of village halls.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Survey

Response - Survey forms were distributed to 8,158 of the estimated 8,900 community halls in rural England. A total of 3,348 forms were returned, giving a response rate of 41%. In addition, data from a recent survey in Devon was amalgamated with ACRE's results, which gave a higher response for some questions.

Type of halls covered - 75% of the respondents were independent village hall charities, run by committees representing user organisations and elected members of the public. Around 5% were run by parish councils and a further 6% by community associations. 3% were church halls and the remainder included WI halls, joint provision schemes with local schools, scout halls, reading rooms, Miner's Welfare Institutes and residents association halls.

Size of communities - Over half the respondent halls serve small villages with a population of under 1,000. Almost a fifth serve very small villages of under 300 people. Such small villages are more likely to have no shop, post office, pub, school or regular church service. The village hall is often the only informal public meeting place, so their survival is particularly important to local people

Buildings

Importance - Over 75% were the only multi-purpose community hall in their town or village. Over half the respondent halls have no regular public transport service, which means that local people without cars need facilities within walking distance.

Age - Over half are more than 60 years old and nearly a third were built before the First World War. Over a third are converted buildings, most commonly from former schools, churches, church halls, army huts and barns, but also from a remarkable variety of other buildings. Age contributes to the demand for grant aid, older halls being more likely to need modernisation, major repair or replacement.

Condition - Village halls are not the cold, draughty buildings of popular myth. There has been a welcome improvement in the condition of village and community halls in the ten years since the last village halls survey was carried out, with a reduction in those reported to be in poor condition from 30% to 6%. Volunteers running village halls deserve considerable praise for this. They have had to raise the funds, put a lot of work into grant applications and carry out the work. The improvement may be due, in part, to the introduction of new Health and Safety legislation, which has necessitated the replacement and improvement of old kitchens and toilets and in some cases galvanised committees into

action (as illustrated by Ambridge Village Hall in BBC Radio 4's *The Archers*). It is also attributable to the replacement of old First World War army huts and similar buildings. There is, however, still some way to go in making the nation's halls fit for the next Millennium, because 30% are still not in good condition. Halls serving smaller villages are more likely to be in need of improvement.

Heritage - 34% are located in conservation areas, 7% are Listed Buildings and 15% were built as memorials. Some of the older halls have particular charm and are regarded with great affection. 6% listed special architectural features, including murals, balconies, gas lamps and features retained when converted from churches or schools.

Energy Efficiency - Grants towards energy efficiency surveys and measures have only recently become available, and almost 40% have not yet taken any measures to improve energy efficiency. It may be attributable, in part, to the difficulties of accessing cheap, independent advice. The most common measures were double glazing (32%) and installation of more efficient heating (24%).

Provision for Disabled People - Although there has been a dramatic rise in provision for disabled people since the first survey in 1988, nevertheless 30% of the respondent halls do not have wheelchair access and over half (59%) do not have toilets for disabled people. There is a long way to go in making halls fully accessible for frail elderly people and those with a wider variety of disabilities. Designated car parking spaces were provided at only 13% and induction loops, for the hard of hearing, at only 7%. The National Lottery Charities Board decision to provide grant aid specifically for provision for disabled people is, therefore, welcome.

Adequacy of facilities - Over half the respondent halls have inadequate storage space. Lack of storage reduces use, because the committee room or part of the main hall is then used as a store and activities requiring bulky equipment (such as a youth club, playgroup, amateur dramatics, carpet bowls and table tennis) cannot be accommodated. Kitchens and toilets are also commonly inadequate. Funders are recommended to give higher priority to helping halls improve these basic facilities.

Management and Administration

Charitable Status - Most village halls, and similar community facilities serving rural areas, (86%) are registered charities. The remainder are run by parish/town councils (usually called parish/town halls) and premises run by local authorities, such as day centres, youth centres and schools. Very few (0.5%) are incorporated as charitable companies.

Recruitment of volunteers and community support - Over 60% of the halls surveyed have difficulty in finding people to serve on the management committee. This represents a disturbing rise of 9% in the last ten years. Reasons may include: changes in lifestyle (such as the fact that more women are working); changes in the rural population; concern about personal liability as a trustee; and the creeping bureaucracy imposed by legislation, which can be off-putting. A plethora of regulations now affects ordinary village halls and similar buildings such as Public Entertainment Licences, food hygiene legislation, electrical safety regulations, Risk Assessment and employment legislation. A lack of appreciation by the community, of the importance of the work of the management committee, may also be a factor. An injection of fresh blood is always welcome and can help keep a committee active and

forward-looking. The most significant problem, faced by half the respondents, was lack of support from the community, with insufficient use a close second. Vandalism or security problems were recorded by a fifth of respondents.

Trusteeship - There is widespread confusion about the trusteeship of village halls. There are normally two sets of trustees: One set are the Holding (or Custodian) trustees, who act as the legal owners of the property and hold the property in trust. They have no responsibility for day to day management. Responsibility for day-to-day management normally lies with a separate management committee who are the Managing, or Charity, Trustees.

Health and Safety - Only a small proportion of village halls have policies on Health and Safety or Risk Assessment. The drawing up of such policies is important, because it enables risks to be identified and appropriate instructions to be issued to staff and volunteers.

Equal Opportunities - Written Equal Opportunities policies cannot be neglected, even though most halls are available to the whole community. Such policies are increasingly sought by funders. Efforts to provide for, and welcome people who are not currently using a hall (e.g. young people, disabled people or ethnic minorities), can bring a huge improvement in the quality of life for isolated individuals, as well as improving use and support. Some activities, such as short mat bowls, drama, arts, crafts and computing, appeal to all ages and abilities, and are particularly good at bringing the community together.

Staffing - Most village halls and similar premises are staffed only by a part-time, paid or voluntary cleaner or caretaker. Less than a third of the halls surveyed provide written job descriptions for paid staff and less than a fifth provide a contract of employment. The provision of a job description is good practice, particularly where staff work unsupervised, and committees will need to check their practice against the new requirements of the National Minimum Wage and Working Time Directive.

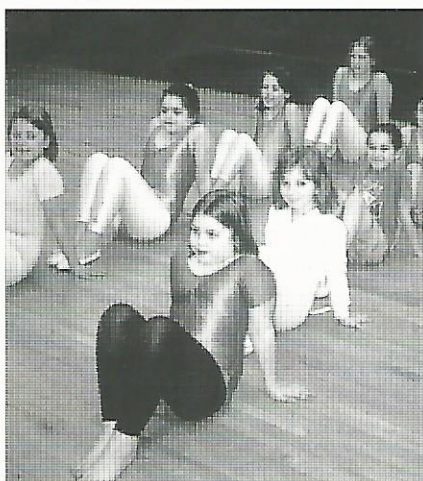
Finance - revenue

Running costs - Village halls are run extremely economically, thanks to an enormous amount of voluntary work. Almost 40% have running costs below £2,000 p.a. and 79% fall within the 'small charity' classification, with running costs below £10,000 p.a. However, those with lower running costs tend to be less well used.

Hire charges - Less than half the respondent halls cover running costs from hire charges. Those halls that cannot do so rely heavily on fundraising and voluntary maintenance to keep going. Small changes in use can have a significant effect on viability. One example is the closure of hundreds of rural playgroups, following the introduction of nursery places for four year-olds, which could have very serious consequences for some village halls. However, the development of new activities can be the turning point for some halls. Committee members often say that short mat bowls has made a dramatic difference to finances, upkeep, community spirit and support for their hall.

Fundraising - Almost half (48.5%) of the respondent halls fundraise to cover running costs. At least 76% of the respondent halls are fundraising each year, raising approximately £3 million p.a., indicating that the total amount raised each year by village halls, and similar community buildings, could be around £7.5 million.

The development of new activities can be the turning point in the viability of village halls.



Voluntary Work - A huge amount of routine maintenance and repair work is carried out by volunteers. 81% of halls rely on volunteers for routine maintenance and repair work, 47% on volunteers for redecorating. In some cases, major improvements and much of the building of a new hall has been carried out by volunteers

Financial Support - Parish/town councils are the principal source of public financial help with running costs, but less than a third of respondent halls receive regular financial help from their parish/town council. However, 40% had received finance from their parish/town councils for improvements in the past five years. Only 6% receive regular financial support from either the district, county or unitary council.

Bars - Only 12% of respondent village halls, and similar premises, have a regular bar to supplement their income.

VAT - Only 6% of respondent halls are registered for VAT. One third of these halls are run by parish/town councils. Income and expenditure are normally way below the threshold for registration and the result is that village halls are unable to reclaim VAT on purchases. Most of the time, the work involved in voluntary registration would not merit the amount that could be reclaimed. However, when building alterations and extensions are being carried out, the VAT burden can run into tens of thousands of pounds. For many years, Customs and Excise allowed parish and town councils to take responsibility for, and reclaim some of the VAT paid on work for independent charitable village halls, if it was paid for by grants from local authorities, government and charitable foundations. However, Customs and Excise intend to cut back this scheme in 1999. It is, therefore, extremely important that the Chancellor's Review of Charity Taxation introduces a special VAT refund scheme for extensions, major repairs and improvements to charitable village halls and similar community buildings to replace the old scheme. The bulk of the work which village halls now need is improvement work. The average cost is over £63,000, costing a further £11,000 in VAT.

Rate Relief - Although 77% of respondent halls receive rate relief, only 58% receive the full 100% rate relief. Rate relief is an extremely important and cost effective form of financial support. The level of mandatory charitable relief was raised to 80% in 1990, in order to offset the increase in costs attached to changes in the rating system. Rating authorities are not allowed to make a blanket policy of refusing rate relief. This means that each case must be treated on its merits, but, nevertheless, 26 of the 235 districts/unitary authorities covered by the survey, are noticeably less likely to grant full rate relief to village halls, than others. Those districts not granting full rate relief to community buildings are recommended to consider the value and cost-effectiveness of doing so.

Finance - capital

Insurance - The mean insurance value of the halls surveyed was £155,075, double the amount ten years ago, reflecting the escalation in building costs and standards demanded of village halls. The cost of building, or renovating, a village hall or community centre to modern standards, is not widely appreciated by either the public or local authorities. This is one reason why such work has been badly under-funded in many parts of the country.

Valuation - The total capital value of the 8,500 village halls, and similar rural community buildings, in England could be around £1.3 billion, plus land. This is a huge resource by any standards, most of it charitable, which needs to be properly maintained.

Sources of grant aid - Despite the advent of the National Lottery, local authorities are still the most widespread source of grant aid for capital improvements. It is, therefore, clear that the Lottery is not replacing local authorities as a source of funding. Indeed, local authorities are an important source of partnership funding to enable halls to qualify for Lottery grants. However, it would appear that county councils are now helping a smaller proportion of halls than ten years ago, following budget cuts and withdrawals.

Recent improvements - 61% of the respondents had carried out improvements in the last five years, most of which were in halls built before 1930. Almost a third of these halls had to carry out work to meet Health and Safety requirements, without which some halls would have had to close.

The effectiveness of improvements - Almost half of those carrying out improvements report that use has since increased. Much of this work was necessary simply in order to enable existing activities to continue, demonstrating that capital grant aid for improving village halls and community centres can be an important tool in community development.

Planned improvements - 64% of respondents are planning major improvements or repairs within the next five years, totalling approximately £81 million. 60% are planning to apply for a grant for this work, of which 16% have already made applications. The total amount of grant needed by 1,728 halls is approximately £73 million, the average grant sought being £42,000. This indicates that the potential demand from rural halls in England alone, over the next five years, could be as high as £190million at current prices. Given that local authority budgets are providing only a few million p.a., and the Rural Development Commission £1.1million p.a., this indicates a very serious shortfall. The obvious source for the remaining funds is the National Lottery and the Lottery Distributors will need to review their priorities if they are to deal with this demand. Funding from the Countryside Agency also needs to be increased.

Problems with lottery funding

The present position - The results clearly indicate that, at the time of the survey, the National Lottery was not yet delivering the funding for village and community halls that was heralded before it was introduced. This is despite the fact that, in theory, all the Boards can help these projects. The picture may be changing, however, as the National Lottery Charities Board (NLCB) had, at the time the survey was undertaken, only run one programme suitable for village hall and community centre projects, and had yet to announce its first grants under the new 'Community Involvement' programme. Nevertheless, the NLCB had helped more survey respondents than all the other Boards put together. The Arts Council, Sports Council and Heritage Lottery Fund had each only helped a tiny fraction of halls, despite the widespread use of halls for arts and sports, and the fact that at least 34% are in Conservation Areas.

Low success rate - Enquiries by ACRE indicate that just 745 of the 19,000¹ urban and rural community halls in England, i.e. 4%, have been



Many halls are used for sports and arts activities, but are not sufficiently arts or sports orientated to qualify for funding from the Arts and Sports Lottery Boards.

awarded lottery funding, of which 215 have responded to this survey. The size of the awards has not been addressed in this survey but, given the stringent criteria operated by the Lottery Boards, it would follow that quite substantial grants have been made to a small proportion of halls.

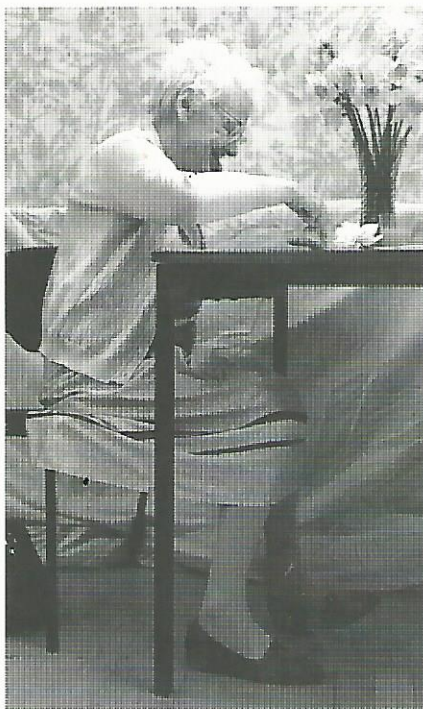
Eligibility - There is a problem in that village and community halls are, in theory, eligible for funding from any of the Boards, because they are multi-purpose, but this is also their downfall. The NLCB is the obvious source to approach, but its themes change, so village halls cannot always qualify and, indeed, could not do so until recently. In rural areas, the village hall has to serve as the local arts centre and sports centre, because of the lack of alternatives. This survey shows that ordinary halls are well used for these purposes but have further potential. It would appear, however, that many cannot meet the criteria for funding by the Arts and Sports Lottery Boards, because they are not sufficiently arts or sports orientated, although some projects that develop the use of village halls for these purposes may now qualify under the joint Small Grants scheme. Since Arts and Sports Lottery grants have been effective in increasing use for their intended purpose (see D13) the time has clearly come for these Boards to re-appraise their policies and criteria, with a view to helping medium-sized, less ambitious schemes.

Application procedures - Many village hall committees have complained about the bureaucracy involved in Lottery applications. They claim that, with the exception of the NLCB, the bureaucracy of the forms is often out of proportion to the modest scale of the proposal, and that design standards are not commensurate with the real, or foreseeable, needs of the community. There is anecdotal evidence that many committees have wasted a great deal of time and effort on unsuccessful applications, sometimes to two or more boards. It is hoped that the Lottery distributors will take note of the experience of ACRE's 21st Century Halls Millennium Commission Fund. The criteria for this were designed specifically to assess community-based building projects and the provision of appropriate advice noticeably raised the quality of applications.

Potential for improvement - The conclusion must be that the National Lottery is not yet doing the job that was promised, and which it should be doing, in improving the fabric and community use of village and community halls. The Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sport may be a suitable vehicle for investigating lottery funding for community buildings and exploring how the whole system could be improved, since individual Boards inevitably follow their own priorities.

A 'single front door' - One solution would be to set up a joint lottery distribution mechanism for community building projects, a 'single front door', to which each of the distributors contribute. This would:

- reduce the wasted effort and cost for both applicants and Lottery Boards, in making several applications for one project
- enable the use of criteria appropriate to multi-purpose community buildings, so that they meet the community's needs, as opposed to inappropriate standards set for other purposes
- enable good quality advice to be given to applicants before applications are submitted, in order to avoid wasting time and effort, and achieve good results
- enable the Lottery Boards, including the New Opportunities Fund, to share the burden of dealing with the backlog of many years of under-funding, whilst targeting their resources at areas which have not had their share of lottery funding.



Village halls serve vulnerable and disadvantaged people in rural areas who do not have private transport.

Use

Size of village and use of halls - Use of halls tends to increase with population size. Halls which are least used tend to serve the smallest communities, where they are, nevertheless, important because they are usually the only community meeting place.

Falls in use - Significant changes have taken place in the use of village and community halls since the last survey in 1988. Although the average level of use has increased slightly, there has been a worrying drop in use by activities serving the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people, who are unlikely to have private transport. These include playgroups, youth clubs, senior citizen's clubs, Women's Institutes and baby clinics. This is perhaps a sign of wider changes in rural life and the rural population.

Activities - the number of different activities recorded was 311, compared to 373 in 1988. The key users of village halls are still local community activities, such as playgroups, mothers and toddlers, parish councils, Women's Institutes, youth clubs and senior citizen's groups. These activities can only take place within the community, where they are easily accessible.

Increasing uses - The following regular users are more widespread: Line dancing (a new activity now using 35% of halls weekly); ballroom dancing; amateur dramatics, Rainbows (the precursor to Brownies); short mat bowls.

Use for the provision of services - Despite strong encouragement from RCCs and the Rural Development Commission, there has been little growth in the use of village halls as 'multi-purpose village centres', providing services, as well as community activities, under one roof. However, use for luncheon clubs and day centres for elderly and disabled people has increased. Communities planning new halls or refurbishment need to take the opportunity to explore providing services that would otherwise be difficult to reach by public transport, such as doctors' surgeries or clinics. It is pleasing to see some community shops and telecottages/resource centres now in a small percentage of halls. However, the support of other agencies, such as health authorities and social services departments, is essential if the potential is to be realised and a real contribution made to sustainability.

Numbers using halls - Two to three million people, or up to a third of the rural population, use village halls, many on a regular basis.

Recommendations

For Government

1. The current Government has created a climate of partnership with the voluntary sector that is very welcome. However, there is now a need for it to do more to publicly acknowledge the important role which community buildings play in improving the quality of life, particularly for disadvantaged people and rural area, and to signal the need to support them. Village halls and community buildings also make a signif-

icant contribution to sustainability by reducing the need for car journeys. The forthcoming Rural White Paper, guidance being issued to the new Regional Development Agencies and the launch of the Countryside Agency provide suitable opportunities to make a start.

2. There is a need for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), or the Select Committee for the Lottery (as appropriate), to investigate with the Lottery Distributors how the system for funding for community buildings could be improved and simplified. The DCMS should encourage the Lottery Boards to develop a permanent, joint lottery distribution system for capital grants for community building projects.

3. All Government Departments need to apply the *small organisations' litmus test*, to ensure that new legislation does not place inappropriate standards on volunteers running small charities. When new standards are necessary Departments should consider how village halls and similar community buildings might be helped with compliance costs.

4. The Department for Education and Employment should work with the Pre-School Learning Alliance to address the reduction in the number of rural playgroups that may stem from the introduction of nursery education for 4 year olds.

5. The Treasury should implement recommendations made to the Chancellor's Review of Charity Taxation and introduce a new VAT refund scheme for extensions, major repairs and refurbishments for charitable halls and similar community buildings. Changes in VAT recovery rules for parish councils assisting with such work due to be made by H.M. Customs and Excise in 1999 should be delayed until such a refund scheme is in place.

For Local Government

1. Local authorities should continue to provide capital finance for improvements to community buildings in order to ensure that they continue to play a crucial role in sustaining community life in rural areas. Local authorities remain a key source of capital funding for improvements to community buildings despite the advent of the national Lottery. This is because not every project can qualify for Lottery funding and most Lottery boards expect partnership funding to be provided. This is often beyond the means of local fundraising. Local authorities must recognise that warm, properly equipped village halls and similar buildings are essential to sustain community life throughout their areas and address this responsibility. The budgetary difficulties are well recognised but some level of provision is essential.

2. Local authorities should help village hall committees to plan for the future and encourage the development of new opportunities to address disadvantage in rural communities. Local authorities need to recognise the danger that simply looking after the building can sap the energy and commitment of volunteers, particularly if the building is old and/or in need of substantial repair or refurbishment. Staff need to use a 'light touch' when applying standards or regulations to village halls.

3. Local authorities should consider providing 100% rate relief for charitable community facilities where they do not already do so. This is an

extremely cost-effective form of support that can do a great deal to maintain the viability and quality of village halls and similar buildings.

4. Local authorities should support community buildings by providing 'help in kind' to encourage more effective management and use. This is not something for 'community development' or 'leisure' departments alone, but for the whole authority to consider. For example:

- using community buildings for the delivery of local services (e.g. bus tokens, polling station, housing advice, etc.)
- providing free technical advice to committees with building problems or planning improvements
- insisting that developers make financial provision for providing or improving community facilities when considering planning applications
- developing IT links between Further Education colleges, schools, council departments and village halls
- help with marketing facilities
- consulting and communicating with management committees over policies likely to affect their areas.

For those running community buildings

1. Management committees need to ensure that their building is meeting the needs of the community, and be receptive to new ideas and opportunities. They should also recognise the danger of spending all their energy and resources in looking after the building. Committees need to be open to fresh ideas, encourage community participation by disadvantaged people and do their best to communicate and consult with the local community. Active management committees are often the springboard for new activities and for community-wide events throughout the year. The Millennium offers a prime opportunity for community-wide events such as celebrations and exhibitions about village history. Ideas in this report may help.

2. Management committees should be encouraged to bring their facilities for people with disabilities, their employment practices and Health and Safety policies up to date. They should consider whether their premises comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

3. Management committees should recognise the role of their hall in improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people and actively encourage use of the hall by these groups.

4. Management committees should address the difficulties they face in recruiting volunteers, although it is recognised that there may not be an easy solution. In some villages difficulties in recruitment may be unavoidable, for example in villages where population change has reduced the pool of people available to serve on the committee. Elsewhere it may be a question of addressing how the committee operates (e.g. length, frequency and comfort of meetings, chairmanship), setting up sub-committees, improving communication and making the community aware of the importance of the hall.

For the ACRE network and other voluntary sector organisations

1. The ACRE network, regional, European and national voluntary sectors should use the survey to raise awareness of the importance of supporting village and community halls at community level and among local authorities and government departments and agencies.
2. The future arrangements and levels of capital funding for community building projects need to be discussed with the DCMS, the National Lottery distributors, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in conjunction with other national organisations with similar concerns.
3. The level of regular financial support from parish councils for village and community halls needs to be improved with the support of the LGA and the NALC.
4. Village hall committees should be encouraged to address the need for adequate provision for disabled people, to encourage use by disadvantaged people and encourage the National Lottery Boards and other funders to support such provision.
5. Village hall committees should be encouraged to address employment practices, Equal Opportunities policies and recruitment difficulties.
6. The ACRE network and the Charity Commission should work together to promote clear understanding of trusteeship by village hall committees through training for village hall committee members.

For the Lottery Boards

1. Lottery distributors need to assess whether their priorities and mechanisms for distributing grant aid are appropriate for village and community halls. They should work together to develop common and appropriate application forms for community building projects.
2. The New Opportunities Fund should develop the potential of village and community halls to be 'Healthy Living Centres' for every village by helping them to offer a range of activities to keep people mentally alert, physically fit and able to maintain their independence.

For Health Authorities and Primary Health Care Teams

1. Health Authorities and Primary Health Care Teams need to consider the advantages of locating visiting surgeries, clinics and other services in village halls and other community buildings where they are more accessible to rural people.

2. Primary Health Care teams need to work with village hall committees to develop village halls and similar buildings as 'Healthy Living Centres' where people can participate in activities for their physical and mental well being.

For the wider public

1. Rural communities need to be aware of the importance of their village hall and its current and potential future role in their local area.

2. Rural communities need to actively support their village hall or community centre and be aware of the vital role of volunteers in village hall management. It is up to each community to take the lead in ensuring their village hall provides the facilities their village needs to be sustainable in the 21st Century.



Village halls have the potential to be the Healthy Living Centres for every village.

Appendix A

A Brief History of Village Halls

(Abridged and updated from the report of the 1988 National Village Halls Survey)

Early days

The precursor of the village hall was the church or parish room, which served as the meeting place for both church and other activities. In 1841 the School Sites Acts encouraged landowners to provide sites for the building of village schools. Many schools served as village meeting places and some have been turned into a village hall or community centre.

Many older village hall buildings are church halls, schools, barns, stables or cottages later converted into village halls. Miners Welfare Institutes, provided by Pit Companies, and Market Halls also date from the nineteenth century. Towards the end of the nineteenth century philanthropic landowners began to provide reading rooms and also purpose-built village halls, sometimes as a memorial to a loved one. Village clubs also developed, usually for the male population.

The First and Second World Wars

The main impetus to village hall building came after the First World War. Three factors account for the surge in village hall building in the 1920s:

- the desire to provide a memorial to honour those who gave their lives (in some places much of the young male generation was lost).
- a national drive to develop social and educational provision in rural areas
- the availability of Army and RAF huts

In 1919 the National Council of Social Service (now NCVO) was formed and one of its first aims was to establish 'village social councils'. However, Sir John Cripps¹ points out that "progress seems to have been slow until RCCs, with the National Council, started to tackle the greatest need of all. The building or improvement of a village hall was quickly seen to be the most effective way of bringing all interests in a village together. When the National Council, in 1924, offered to run an experimental scheme, the Development Commission persuaded the Treasury to provide £5,000 for interest-free loans to discover the least sum required to enable a village to erect or extend a hall. The fund was a revolving one, and there were no defaulters."²

Many halls built in the last thirty years have replaced First World War huts and halls built from public

subscription in the 1920s. The rate of provision of village halls between 1919 and 1929 was at least twice as great as that in any subsequent ten year period.

In the 1930s village hall building continued at a steady pace and this was largely the result of assistance from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, which pioneered grants to provide and improve village halls. In Cambridgeshire, Henry Morris pioneered Village Colleges (joint provision schemes with schools), which were also developed in Lincolnshire.

Village halls played their part in the defence of the country in the Second World War. Not only were they used for civil defence training and entertainment for troops, Gordon Welchman in *Breaking the Enigma Codes* describes how village halls within a wide radius of Letchworth, Hertfordshire were also used to make electrical subassemblies.

By the end of the Second World War statutory powers to provide grant aid had been created (the 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act and the 1944 Education Act) and the Carnegie UK Trust felt that its objective had been achieved. The aftermath of the war, including financial problems, meant, however, that the then Ministry of Education was unable to commence a regular grant aid programme until 1955. A few 'temporary' village halls were nevertheless built shortly after the war by NCSS, financed by the Development Commission.

1955 onwards

From 1955 to 1980 there was a steady rate of village hall provision thanks to greater levels of financial assistance from the government and local authorities, together with the growing need to replace old halls and the growing leisure demands of the population. The grant scheme was a successful partnership which provided a strong incentive to local fundraising and local authority support, with a grant of up to 50% of the cost from the Department of Education and Science dependent on at least 25% from the local authorities and 25% raised from the village.

In 1981, despite widespread opposition, the Department of Education and Science (DES) passed responsibility for providing capital grants for village hall and community centre projects to local authorities. £3.1million was added to the Rate Support Grant for this purpose. During the 1980s Manpower Service Commission Community Programme schemes helped a number of villages build halls which would otherwise have been impossible to fund because of the escalation in building costs.

Although the provision of new halls has slowed slightly, as might be expected eventually, the level of demand

¹ From *Christmas Coals to Community Care: The Countryside, Past, Present and Future* Sir John Cripps, CBE. (The Sir George Haynes Memorial Lecture, 1984, NCVO.)

² The Village Halls Loan Fund still exists, now run by ACRE on behalf of the Rural Development Commission, and although no longer interest-free still has no defaulters.

for grant aid has not. Health and Safety legislation has necessitated the improvement and replacement of many older halls and the introduction of VAT affected improvement work. ACRE monitored grant aid from local authorities from 1981 onwards and although most counties and districts initially provided support the picture became more and more patchy as time went by without the leverage of DES funds. As a result of the 1988 village halls survey the Rural Development Commission and The Carnegie UK Trust reintroduced grants schemes. The advent of the National Lottery has been heralded as the source of future funding for village halls and the hopes for the next Millennium must rest with that source.

Changes in use

Village Clubs (providing snooker and billiards for men only) have dwindled and radio-listening clubs have vanished but activities such as whist drives and dances remain popular. New activities have arrived, including playgroups, short mat bowls, martial arts, discos and line dancing. Less conventional activities include Radio 4's 'Any Questions?', 'Gardeners' Question-Time' and panel games. The London to Brighton bike ride uses village halls as rest points and, from time to time, halls are used as emergency shelters in floods, snowstorms and disasters. Telecottages or IT Resource Centres look set to herald the future, bringing communal information points and computer training.

Appendix B

Other Activities

The following 203 different other activities were recorded in village halls. Within each type of activity the most widespread are given first.

Services

Computer Courses/IT centre
Societies for disabled people
First Aid courses (St John's Ambulance/Red Cross)
Alcoholics Anonymous meetings
Army benevolent societies
MP's surgery
Police surgery
Neighbourhood watch
Social Services
Local Information stand
Breast screening
Bus pass issue
Free food distribution
Hairdressing
Job Club
Lip reading
Registrar
Surgery Support Group
Drug advice
Foster care group
Home Start
League of Friends
Legal surgery
Link scheme
Mountain Rescue
National Park enquiries
Optician
Rural challenge

Thrift service
Toy Library
Vet's surgery

Social/Recreational

Slimming Club
Women's clubs
Model Car/Railway/Plane clubs
Ecology/Wildlife societies
Village club
Residents Association
Cycle Club/events
Bird clubs/events
Caravan Club/events
Dog club/events
Dominoes
Twinning Society
Freemasons
Army cadets
Political groups
Scrabble club
Bee keepers club
Rabbit club
Stamp club
Amateur radio club
General club evenings
Aromatherapy
Astronomy society
Friendly societies
Discussion group
National Trust
Rotary Club
Amenity society
Cribbage
Dolls House group
Foxhounds
Lions Club
Meditation group
NFU/Agricultural society
Anglo-German society
Retirement club

Buggy Club
Canal Group
Chapel breakfast
Clairvoyant
Gideons
Hobby horse club
Midland Dowders
Church events
Probus
PTA
Sail measuring
Snake club
Air Training Corps
Territorial Army
Tinnitus Society
UNISON
Welsh Society

The Arts

Tap Dancing
Scottish Country Dancing
Folk Dancing
Morris Dancing
Children's dance
Photography club
Visiting professional theatre
Square dancing
Clog dancing
other dancing
Arts events/society
Modern dance
Country and Western Music
Jazz evenings
Majorettes
Pipe bands
Organ/keyboards clubs
Slide shows
Sugarcraft
Writers Club/circle
Woodcarving
Calligraphy

China Painting
Lace classes
Sequence dancing
Book exchange
Irish dancing
Old time music
Poetry club
Big band appreciation society
Guitar club
Javanese dancing
Juggling
Pottery classes
Spanish dancing
Spinners
Weavers

Educational /Young people

WEA Classes/Adult Education
Homework Club
Lectures/conferences
Complementary health classes
Overnight Accommodation -
Brownies/school/BTCV
Secondary school use
Playschemes
University of the Third Age (U3A)
Prepare school meals
Adult literacy
Kid's club
Children's club
Personal Care classes
Agricultural training
Exams
Road safety course
SAAFA training
Typing classes

Sports

Skittles
Snooker/Pool
Tai Chi
Basketball
Ramblers Club
Fishing club
Archery
Sports/games clubs
Fencing
Petanque
Roller blading
Stoolball
Pony Club
Rugby
Running groups
Sailing Club
Volleyball
Croquet
Netball
Rounders
Step classes
Fitness/weight training

Diving Centre
Indoor football
Wrestling

Attached to Hall

Allotments
Picnic site
Skateboarding

General Events

Wine events
Children's holiday events
Teas
Food events
WI/Village market
Christmas events
Animal shows
Fashion shows
Horticultural shows
TV shows - Songs of Praise, Time
Team, Music
Village singalong/social
Antique valuation
Bonfire night
Beer festival
Tea dances
Wheelchair dances
Carnival queen show
Celebrity events
Hunt ball
Magic shows
Maypole dancing
Psychic fair
Puppet shows
Rare breeds
Well dressing

Commercial uses

Training for local business
Knife sharpening
Market research
Parachute school
Staff Interviews
Staff meetings
Book Fair

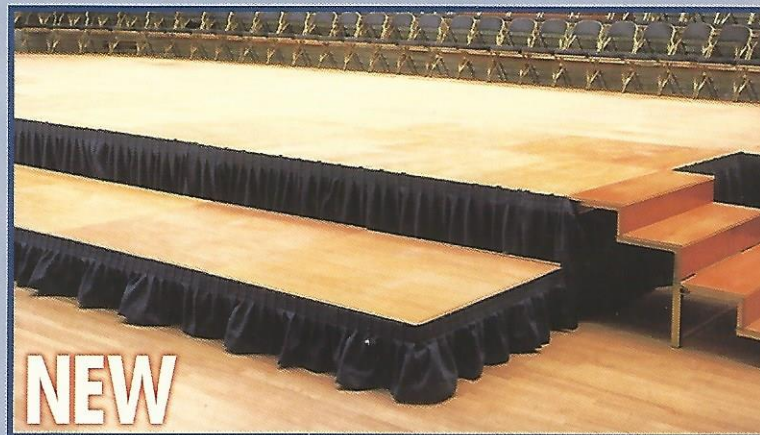
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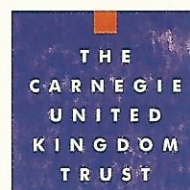
ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is the national association of Rural Community Councils whose shared purpose is to improve the quality of rural life of local communities and particularly of disadvantaged people in rural England. ACRE's aim is to facilitate the development of thriving, diverse and sustainable communities throughout rural England.

Rural Community Councils are county-level charities working to promote the welfare of rural communities by encouraging communities' 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.

ACRE manages a Local Charities and Community Halls Service which represents the interests of village halls at national level. In addition to producing a range of Information Sheets and more detailed publications on a wide range of topics, it also offers advice and information to village halls and RCCs and provides training for Village Hall Advisers.

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