

# Briefing on Cambridgeshire Village Halls as part of National Village Halls Week

January 2018



## Background

The ACRE Network is running the first ever National Village Halls Week, during the week of 22 January 2018. The aim of this week is to celebrate the vibrant and diverse network of these community buildings and champion the volunteers who run these local facilities.

As the only dedicated provider of advice and support to village halls and community buildings in Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire ACRE's aim for this week is to raise the profile of the importance of village halls to our rural communities and the work volunteers do to maintain village halls across the County.

## Our Services as Cambridgeshire ACRE

Cambridgeshire ACRE is the ACRE Network member for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We employ a full-time Village Halls Advisor who provides advice, information, training and advocacy for the County's village hall management committees. We recognise the key role played by village halls as a location for the delivery of rural services and in the wider socio-economic development of our rural communities.

## Key Facts

- There are around 250 village halls and other community buildings in Cambridgeshire. These buildings are a vital resource at the heart of many rural communities, acting as a hub for public access of multiple activities and vital local services. They often play a key role in reducing social isolation in rural communities as they provide the only meeting place for local residents.
- Cambridgeshire ACRE deals with over 200 queries per year from those running village halls. Advice is required on governance issues, legislation, employment of staff, funding and finance, health and safety and marketing. Our service is funded by Defra, Cambridgeshire County Council and through our membership fees.
- 90% of Cambridgeshire village halls are solely run by volunteers who give up countless hours to keep their community facilities open for everyone to use. It has been calculated that volunteers donate an average of 18.5 hours per week, at a notional rate of £7 per hour, which is worth around £6,700 per annum to the management of the hall.
- A fifth of the County's village halls host a community enterprise such as post office, community shop, coffee shop, library, cinema or farmers' market.
- Nearly a quarter of halls were built before World War I. A significant number of halls in the County were originally built to commemorate World War I or individuals who perished during that conflict. Many of these halls now need costly repairs/refurbishment works to keep them in a fit state for community use.
- There are a number of exemplary new-build village halls in Cambridgeshire which are run by paid staff on a more commercial basis, which still fulfilling charitable objectives.
- The most popular uses for village halls are preschool and nursery groups; fitness classes; dance classes; clubs and groups for older people including lunch clubs and retirement clubs; and organisations for young people – including Scouts and Guides, youth clubs, and Girls' and Boys' Brigades.
- Village halls play a key role in civic life, providing a venue for local council meetings, a place for people to vote or to come together to discuss planning matters, and a place for the delivery of Government programmes that support getting people into work or encouraging local enterprise, such as job clubs and business clubs.

## Our ask

We wish to see:

- A dedicated, expert support service for the County's village halls and for the volunteers who run them.
- Financial investment into improving the infrastructure of the County's village halls so they continue to be suitable for myriad purposes.
- The County's village halls recognised for the vital role they play in the delivery of local services and greater use of halls made by public service providers.
- All village halls being effectively run and maximum use being made of them by their communities.

## What you can do

1. Join us in saying 'Thank You' to those running Village Halls for the benefit of their communities by supporting the national campaign on social media over the next few weeks by using one or all of the following:
  - Twitter: @VillageHalls\_wk and @campsacre
  - Facebook: via @ACREnational and @campsacre
  - Instagram: via @ACREnational

Please use any/all of the following hashtags to connect your messages to the national campaign:  
#VillageHallsWeek / #ACREnetwork / #villagehalls / #communitybuildings / #ThankYou / #volunteers

2. Ask any local media (community magazines, local councils with websites or social media) to 'champion' your local village hall, the services it offers and the volunteers dedicated to running it.
3. Look at what's going on in your local village hall. Are any of the activities on offer of interest to you? Could you join in? If there's anything missing, could you be the person to start up a new club or activity?
4. Consider whether you have the time, skills and energy to help run your village hall. Most village halls are always on the look-out for new committee members, so why not offer?
5. If you are a local businessperson, does your business offer products or services that might be useful to your local village hall? Could you offer them a discount as part of your 'corporate social responsibility' if your business practices such a thing.
6. And finally... remember to "celebrate your village hall with a smile"!

### Interested in learning more?

If you would be interested in discussing Cambridgeshire ACRE's work with, and support for, the County's village halls and other community buildings further then we would be pleased to offer a meeting. Please email Lisa Chambers at [lisa\\_chambers@campsacre.org.uk](mailto:lisa_chambers@campsacre.org.uk) or call her on 01353 865048 to arrange.