

'The Voice of Village Halls'



Voice of 10,000 halls to be heard again

A new online voice for the 10,000 village and community halls has been launched today by the national charity ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). The National Village and Community Halls Network will take over the role of the National Village Halls Forum and act as a reference group enabling the grass roots expertise of knowledgeable village and community hall trustees, volunteers and councillors to feed into meetings with MPs, Government departments and Consultation responses.

Alan West, formerly chairman of the National Village Halls Forum explained; "For almost 35 years the National Village Halls Forum was the voice of around 90,000 volunteers running village and community halls. The Forum had difficulty recruiting new younger officers and raising funds but still felt there was an important role to be played in speaking out, particularly when faced with tax, finances and legislation that was likely to adversely affect the management of community facilities."

ACRE is pleased to be hosting the new Network and welcomes the sponsorship by Norris and Fisher (Insurance Brokers) Ltd. Hall management committees and other organisations and individuals with an interest in village halls are invited to sign up via the webpage to share good practice and experiences with other like-minded members as well as contributing to the development of appropriate legislation and regulation.

Alan West added: "Last year we met The Right Honourable Oliver Letwin at Downing Street to emphasise the importance of village halls in rural communities and to highlight the support volunteers managing them need. We intend to continue this important work through the National Village and Community Halls Network."

Four priorities of the newly formed Network will be consideration of:

- VAT on extensions and alterations and the possibility of a VAT Refund Scheme.
- How funding might best be sought for capital improvements.
- The delivery of long-term advice and support for volunteers managing buildings and;
- The disproportionate charge for music copyright licenses where music is rarely played.

Ends

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Notes to Editors: ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is the national voice for the 38 rural community councils who make up the country's largest rural network. Together, we reach 52,000 grassroots organisations in 11,000 rural communities www.acre.org.uk. Sign up for the new online Village and Community Halls Network [here](#). Email: vchnetwork@acre.org.uk

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