

# NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND VILLAGE HALLS CONSORTIUM

## Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held at Breamish Hall, Powburn Tuesday 20 June 7.00pm for 7.30pm

**Present:** Jack Hasson - Hepple Village Hall, May Wilson - Breamish hall, Powburn, George Courtice - Middleton, Mike Greener - Spittal Community Centre, Helen Chamberlain & Jackie Reeves- Craster, Simon Hadden & Jane Kartupelis - Longframlington, Peter Calder & Dean Keyworth - Lowick, Len Glen-Davison - Ingram, Maureen Blakey - Whittingham, Peter Pacepavicius & Barbara Anderton - Netherwitton, Gustav Macleod & Chris Stevenson - Ellingham Village hall, Jean Lawrence & Shelagh Coxon - Creighton Memorial hall Embleton, Pauline Martin - Ulgham WI, Jane Pannell - Glendale Hall and Wooler Warm Hub

**Apologies were received from:** Liz Spence - St James's Church Centre Alnwick, Gill Bray - Shilbottle Community Hall, Annette Manning - Beadnell WI hall, John Haughie - Howick Vill hall, Eileen Cameron - Felton, Sue Jackson - South Charlton, Ros & John Grey – Netherton War Memorial hall, Julie Famelton - Wingates Village Inst, Bill Brook- Bamburgh Pavilion, Peter Burnham - Warkworth War Memorial Hall

**Attending:** Tracey Morgan – Community Action Northumberland

### 1. Welcome & apologies

Jack Hasson, our Chairman, welcomed all present and thanked Breamish hall for agreeing to host us. The list of apologies received was read (see above).

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on October 27 2022 at Longhoughton Community & Sports Hall were agreed as an accurate record. No matters were arising from these minutes.

### 3. Presentation by Jane Pannell

Jane Pannell is no stranger to the voluntary and community sector having been involved at a senior level in a range of different charitable organisations in the county – particularly in Wooler & Berwick – and this was after a successful career in local government ending as Chief Executive Officer at Berwick Borough Council which was subsumed, along with all the other five District and Borough Councils back in 2009, into the unitary authority of Northumberland County Council. We have taken the unusual decision to include Jane's presentation below, minimally edited.

*George Courtice asked me to talk about the Repair Café and essentially pretty much anything else I wanted to talk about! What fun! What an opportunity!!*

*So, let's talk about the Repair Café concept.*

*Rothbury has one and there was a fair bit of publicity about it. And at the same time one of the Wooler Parish Councillors who does a lot of handyperson work offered his services and showed an interest.*

*So, three of us went off to Rothury to see what they do and how they did it etc, and they operate under a local Friends of the Earth branch and sourced funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority.*

*So, we learned a lot about their operation and brought the idea back to Glendale. And we've agreed to develop the concept in a partnership between Glendale Connect, Glendale Gateway Trust and Wooler URC.*

*We all know that we live in a disposable society – and in a disposable world. Hands up anyone who's*

- disposed of a chair or stool with a wonky leg?*
- Or a DVD player that's swallowed a DVD?*
- Or bought a new laptop because the old one seems a bit slow?*
- Or a jumper with a hole in the elbow?*

*A significant number of luxury items are disposed of within 12 months of purchase. Few people think about repairing and even fewer know where to find someone with the skills to repair items. It's arguable that the elderly, the unemployed and others with skills are just not appreciated. So, wouldn't*

*it be great to make use of that rich pool of resources and value what people can offer? And at the same time save the enormous use of raw materials and energy that constant production of new models involves? And at the same time save products from going to landfill?*

*And above all, Repair Café just wants to show how much fun repairing things can be, and how easy it often is.*

*So we've decided to have a go. As ever in the north, we've developed a slightly different approach to the Rothbury set-up and we've registered with the Repair Café Foundation - an international agency, based in Amsterdam and which has the following goals:*

- a) to bring back repairing into local society in a modern way;*
- b) to maintain repair expertise and to spread this knowledge;*
- c) to make it fun and encourage social cohesion.*

### **So, how does it work? What's needed?**

- *Find a suitable venue – a village hall or community centre that can accommodate a range of tables for different skills*
- *Find some local people with a range of skills willing to participate*
- *Set up a structure to achieve funding – maybe an existing umbrella group rather than starting from scratch*
- *Ensure that a governing body has adequate insurance and the range of policies – safeguarding and equalities and diversity*
- *Volunteers to help organise, receive people with repair needs, make coffee/tea. etc*

*The range of repairs that could be tackled could include:*

*Mechanical, Electrical, Sewing repairs, Woodworking, Computer repairs, Bicycles, Gardening advice and plant identification, etc*

*Clearly, with some of these repairs there needs to be reassurance about the level of skills and for electrical repairs, items will need to be PAT tested.*

*So there will need to be items purchased as set up costs:*

- *PAT testing kits*
- *Lighting for each table – a table lamp type – to make sure the skilled person has high visibility*
- *A sewing machine*
- *Although a lot of skilled people prefer to use their own kit, we might need to purchase some*
- *A laptop – you'll realise that the days of items arriving with their own hard copy manuals are past! So, there is likely to be a need to look up the manuals for the item on line.*

*Just opening up the Repair Café cold and without any idea of the items likely to be brought along is a bit open season. So, the process will be:*

- a) Invite people to say what they want to bring along*
- b) Call a meeting of the skilled people/organising group and assess what skills are going to be needed – some items might not be capable of being repaired – or we might not have the skills available and it's important to be honest about that.*
- c) A schedule is drawn up of which repairs are brought in and at what times and people seeking repairs are informed*
- d) On the day and following set up time, there needs to be a reception desk for people to clock in with their items*
- e) Having a coffee morning at the same time helps is always good news and a nominal charge will help to meet revenue costs.*

- f) In addition each table should have an obvious donation jar should anyone like to make a contribution
- g) Inevitably some items will need spare parts and if that cannot be anticipated before the Repair Café day, the owners will need to go away and acquire them
- h) And sometimes a repair will simply be impossible – but maybe some suggestion about alternative uses could be put forward.
- i) Communication and discussion and joint working between skilled people are all vital

And then we compiled a business plan and sought agreement from all the partners and their governing bodies.

So, having got this far, the next issue was about funding the Repair Café. It's likely that the original North of Tyne Combined Authority funding was a one off and is no longer available. And we have set-up costs to meet as well as revenue costs.

Over the past 12 or so years I've been involved in a range of fund seeking activities and generally have been able to access money where we need it. And there are a few handy tips.

Let's be sensible and recognise that it's more difficult right now to raise funds than it has been in the past. Everyone will have seen the way in which national charities are using TV ads to attract funding – notably Alzheimer's Society and the RSPCA. And they've made no bones about the issues they face – the general economic situation and the fallout from the Covid pandemic.

And you've probably found some difficulties as well – the number of older folk in particular who decided following lockdown that they would review what they do and have stopped volunteering. And the trouble is that some folk were doing it for so long that an up and coming generation felt there was nothing for them to do. We need to open up some of our groups so that new people can feel welcome and willing to make their contribution. And maybe that means looking at a new way of doing things, a new time of day for meeting perhaps.

Please be assured that money is around. If you don't already receive it, sign up for the NCC external funding lists -it comes out roughly monthly and contains current opportunities for funding. And don't forget that the NCC has community chest funding and your local councillor also has a budget. CAN and Northumberland CVA also send out regular newsletter with links to funding sources. As does the Community Foundation.

The CF has access to a really significant range of funds. They encourage philanthropy and do nice things like bringing small grant giving sources together – e.g. Northern Angel Fund. They invest the capital sums and generate millions of pounds of funding every year. Some people say their application process is too difficult – well no one said fund seeking was easy! But they have simplified their processes. It comes in two parts.

- i. First of all, you need to register with them – that means telling them about your organisation – constitution, accounts, safeguarding policy and process, equalities and diversity policy, etc. and they have templates for those – and so do other organisations.
- ii. And then there's the application for the particular project you have in mind and the outcomes you anticipate

And there's always someone to speak to. I have a bee in my bonnet about these funds because the north of the county is poor at applying for funding to the CF and the CF looks after the funds for a number of windfarm benefit panels. I can authoritatively tell you that these have difficulties in spending their money because I serve on the Barmoor Wind Farm Panel and we've underspent for well over 18 months! There just aren't enough applications.

A real impediment is a lack of ambition. One scheme I was involved in a few years back involved a thorough overhaul of a building and the team I was working with thought funding for maybe £15k would do the trick. We eventually raised £76k for a complete makeover and kitting out for a first class community using space with a sustainability of several decades.

So, let's sum up and I feel free to harangue you and nag you and berate you because this is likely to be my last opportunity for doing so. I have cancer of which there's no treatment – my doctor expects me to have departed by the end of the year.

- 1) *Recognise that fundraising is more difficult now than it has been in the past – but it's very possible for a well thought out and described project*
- 2) *Go for the big picture – tell the story about why your scheme is needed and what impact it will have*
- 3) *Expect to go for a portfolio of funds – the days of one funder funding everything are largely behind us*

*Finally I'm an old hippy and a practising Christian . So, as I approach the end of my life, you won't be surprised to hear me say*

- ✓ *Dream a little about what you want to achieve*
- ✓ *Believe in it all being possible*
- ✓ *Work together and love one another*

*Thank you for listening*

Those present showed Jane their usual appreciation. This was followed by a Question & Answer session.

When does Glendale hope to start their Repair Café? *The plan is about 6 months since planning started - so this autumn.*

Are the repairers paid? *No, they are all volunteers so no-one is paid.*

On an entirely different topic. Are you optimistic that the 20% Discretionary Rate Relief currently offered to most village halls will be maintained by NCC? *Yes I am. The county would be bereft if community buildings did not continue to provide the services they currently supply.*

North Northumberland Voluntary Network have their bimonthly meeting on July 28<sup>th</sup> and Emma Richardson of NCC is due to speak.

The Community Foundation have confirmed their next face to face session will be held in North Northumberland. Tuesday 18 July 10.00am to 1130am, Tweedmouth Bowling Club, TD15 2HQ. More information and booking details here:

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/time-to-talk-in-northumberland-tickets-661003538377?fbclid=IwAR3cplhi9e2ucDvk9s8c02YsBlvfu95ZZ4xCC02dBQQoOCVbFECyEXjQ6Pw](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/time-to-talk-in-northumberland-tickets-661003538377?fbclid=IwAR3cplhi9e2ucDvk9s8c02YsBlvfu95ZZ4xCC02dBQQoOCVbFECyEXjQ6Pw)

#### **4. Potential future meeting venues**

The following halls indicated they were willing to host future Consortium meetings:  
Ulgham WI, Longframlington, Lowick.

#### **5. Any Other Business**

- 1) The issue of **overnight stays** in halls and new information demanded from insurers had arisen over the last week or so. GC assured the meeting that the major broker for village halls, Allied Westminster, was aware of and sympathetic to the concerns and it was hoping to resolve the problem very shortly. Thanks to Len Glen-Davison at Ingram for drawing the issue to our attention.
- 2) **Training** The Consortium hoped to offer subsidised, face-to-face training to all members across a range of popular subjects during the autumn including: Emergency First Aid, Food Hygiene, Trustee Responsibilities (and Liabilities), Looking after the Money, Insurance, Risk Assessment, and Health & Safety.
- 3) **Solar Power Project** This was introduced to us by Andy Dean of CAN in June of last year and progress has been made with a plan to launch the Co-operative to manage the project this summer. About 40 halls had already expressed an interest.