



Community Action
Northumberland



CAN uses its bi monthly newspaper to help it in supporting local communities with information and advice on a variety of subjects. As well as articles produced in-house it receives and publishes items from other charities, voluntary groups and community organisations. It is not always possible to publish all these articles in full. This publication will include material received but which we were unable to include in our hard copy newsletter and will appear on our website, www.ca-north.org.uk in the library > publications section, alongside the pdf versions of CAN News.

Supplement to CAN News 2804 August to October 2008

The following items are extended versions of the articles appearing in CAN News 2804.

Invitation to enter for Hallmark One

by Louise Currie

You will be aware that CAN launched the Hallmark Scheme some time ago – which is a quality standard scheme for the management of Village Halls and Community Buildings. The purpose of it is to encourage improvement in established management customs and procedures, to obtain recognition from other bodies of a standard of management of community facilities and to encourage, establish and reward, good practice.

The scheme has 3 stages;

- Hallmark 1- assesses whether the hall is complying with the requirements of its charitable status
- Hallmark 2 – assesses compliance with legislative issues
- Hallmark 3 – examines the role of the hall in the community and how it interacts with its users and the wider community

Two halls – Felton Village Hall and Whitley Chapel Memorial Hall have both been awarded Hallmark 1 and have received their certificates. The assessment of both facilities was undertaken as part of the Visitor (Assessor) training, earlier in the year.

Over the last few months, the Hallmark National Steering Group has been amending and improving the scheme and CAN has had to wait for changes to be made to the scheme's paperwork and guidance, before it could open up entry to other halls/buildings. CAN is now in a position to invite halls and community

buildings in the county, to enter their facility for Hallmark 1. CAN is delighted that 46 halls have already registered interest and they will be contacted directly. However, if you want to enter for the scheme, or find out more details, please do not hesitate to contact Louise Currie to request an Entry Form, on 01670 500816 (Or 517178) or by e-mail to louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk

To help you prepare for Hallmark 1

To help interested halls/buildings to be prepared for Hallmark 1 assessment, we are offering the opportunity to attend a session which goes through what management committees will need to have in place, to be ready to enter for Hallmark 1.

These sessions are to be held in;

The Cheviot Centre - Wooler – on Monday 22nd September from 2.00pm – 4.00pm

Acomb Village Hall – on Wednesday 24th September from 10.00am – 12.00 noon

Stannington Village Hall – on Thursday 25th September from 6.30 - 8.30pm

We have chosen a morning, afternoon and evening session in order to try to accommodate everyone.

If you think that attending one of these sessions would be helpful to prepare your committee to enter for the scheme, contact Louise Currie (details above) and a place/places will be reserved for you. **PLEASE CONFIRM THE VENUE OF YOUR CHOICE.** We look forward to hearing from you.

Water Charges

by Alan Hedley

Many community building management committees in Northumberland will already have noticed higher water bills from the year 2006-07. In some parts of the country there have been reports from some halls of a ten-fold increase in water charges.

Increases have resulted following a change in the way in which water companies account for surface water drainage. In the area covered by Northumbrian Water the changes apply to all business customers whose site is supplied via a meter and are being phased in between 2006-07 and 2008-09.

Since the 1999 Water Industry Act, the water companies have introduced new charging regimes for the three main elements of drainage:

- (1) foul water drainage: waste water from sinks, WCs etc
- (2) surface water drainage: rainwater run off from roofs and car parks into main drains

- (3) highways water drainage: a contribution towards the overall cost of drainage for public highways

There are two categories of users: (a) household customers and (b) non-household customers. Category (b) which draws together business and non-business users.

For non-household customers, most charging was formerly on the basis of the rateable value of the property. Under the new regimes, the shift has been towards charging for foul water drainage in relation to metered supply, where a meter has been fitted. Surface water drainage has been charged by reference to the footprint of buildings and drained car parks or hard standings on a site. This is on the basis that it more fairly reflects the relative use of the public drains.

Within Northumbrian Water's region the chargeable area is calculated by measuring the total area of the site. If the entire site drains to Northumbrian Water's sewage system then the whole of the area of the site will be classed as the chargeable area. A reduction can be made if substantial areas of the occupied land does not drain to a sewage system. Examples of this are a car park constructed from permeable material or a grassed or cultivated area such as a playing field or farmland. However it should be noted that each non-connected area must be more than 10% of the total area of the site – smaller, non-connected areas cannot be added together for this purpose.

The charge is raised by reference to one of the 15 surface area charging bands, each of which covers a range of chargeable area.

Properties which were formerly exempted in their own right from business rates, such as places of worship or properties which enjoyed relief by virtue of being charities (including village halls) are now subject to the same rates as business users, as they fall within the non-household category.

The change over is being phased over a 3 year period so that by 2010 no charity will enjoy any relief from the charges.

Understandably there has been much lobbying from national bodies representing churches and community buildings, against these charges but to no avail at this date. I do though understand that in Scotland promises have been made by the Scottish Parliament to extend exemption for churches and charities up to 2014.

Northumbrian Water have calculated the chargeable area for the majority of sites by using digital Ordnance Survey information and state that their site representatives have ensured that site boundaries have been correctly identified.

Hall management committees should be aware that the water companies' calculations are not always accurate and it is the responsibility of the customer to demonstrate any errors on the calculations done by the water company.

United Utilities, the water company covering North West England, give the following advice to enable you to query your assessment:

“Find out where the surface water from your premises flows to and draw an accurate diagram. This must show the following:

- roads, footpaths and neighbouring premises;
- permeable areas such as any permanently grassed or cultivated area of playing field, farmland, racecourse, sports ground, golf course, parkland etc;
- the boundary of your premises;
- any nearby public sewers; and
- where your surface water drains to.

If the charging value of your premises is over £1,000 or the site area is more than 649m², the diagram must be drawn and certified by a qualified professional, such as an architect or a surveyor. They will also be able to help you if you are in any doubt about your site drainage.”

Examples of the surface water and highways drainage charging bands by surface area (excluding standing charges) for 2008-9:

Charging Band	Chargeable Area (m²)	Surface Water (£)	Highway Drainage (£)	Surface Water and Highway Drainage (£)
1	0-124m ²	49	49	98
2	125-299m ²	122	122	244
3	300-649m ²	273	272	545
4	650-1,499m ²	617	616	1,233
5	1,500-2,999m ²	1,290	1,290	2,580
6	3,000-6,999m ²	2,868	2,867	5,735
7	7,000-11,999m ²	5,448	5,448	10,896
8	12,000-17,999m ²	8,603	8,602	17,205
9	18,000-24,999m ²	12,330	12,330	24,660

10	25,000-49,999m2	21,506	21,506	43,012
11	50,000-74,999m2	35,843	35,843	71,686
12	75,000-99,999m2	50,181	50,180	100,361
13	100,000-124,999m2	64,518	64,518	129,036
14	125,000-149,999m2	78,856	78,855	157,711
15	150,000m2 and above	81,447	81,446	162,893

Northumbrian Water state that if their customers do not agree with the chargeable area that calculated for your property then you should apply to them for an application form to allow you to submit the details.

Lobbying at a national level for some relief for charities will continue. At a local level the only immediate possibility of reduction is to check the calculated chargeable area shown on your assessment to ensure you are not being overcharged.

An extended version of this article will be sent to community buildings on CAN's database and will be posted on CAN's website, www.ca-north.org.uk under the services > village halls section.

LEADER APPROACH

by Marc Johnson

LEADER is a French acronym which stands for Liaison Entre Actions de Development de l'Economie Rurale this means Links between the rural economy and development actions. The Leader method has covered three programmes, Leader I from 1991 to 1995, Leader II from 1996 to 1999 and Leader + which in North Northumberland ran from 2003 to 2008.

The New Leader Approach is now a delivery mechanism for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) rather than a separate programme.

The RDPE helps to meet DEFRA's priorities of:

- Making agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable (Axis 1)
- Enhancing the environment and countryside (Axis 2)
- Enhancing opportunity in rural areas (Axis 2)

The New Leader Approach (Axis 4) is cross-cutting across these programme priorities.

The North East have identified six themes that will help to meet DEFRA's priorities, of these five are relevant to the New Leader Approach, these are:

Micro-Enterprise Development

The aim is to increase rural employment opportunities through entrepreneurial activity and by supporting existing micro-enterprises to grow.

Bio-Energy

The aim is to increase the production and use of bio-energy by developing both the market and supply of biofuels and biomass.

Sustainable Communities

The aim is to support communities to enable them to tackle social disadvantage and create the right conditions for growth to sustain viable communities.

Sustainable Farming & Forestry

The aim is to ensure the sustainability of farming and forestry by maintaining and improving competitiveness. This will be achieved by accessing new markets, adding value to products and becoming more market focused.

Tourism & Recreation

The aim is to support the tourism and recreation industry to continue building its national and international competitiveness through innovation, collaboration and networking.

Northumberland Uplands

The Local Development Strategy for the Uplands is called Northumberland Upwards. The vision of this strategy is:

To facilitate the promotion of innovative thinking and the application of new solutions. We believe in joining-up decision making to benefit the economy, community and environment to reach those often left out in our most rural areas. Northumberland Upwards will build on opportunities and address key rural issues. The principal target is to further progress on promoting sustainable growth.

The Local Action Group see their role as one of building a series of networks to enable local businesses and communities to identify, develop and implement solutions.

The Northumberland Uplands New Leader approach is a new process which helps people to access knowledge, to work together in a cooperative environment, to work with existing providers of solutions, and to access and benefit from all sorts of funds complimentary to the New Leader approach.

More details are available at www.nnpa.org.uk/newleader

Northumberland Coast and Lowlands

The Coast and Lowlands Local Development Strategy aims to address a broad range of social, economic and environmental challenges faced by the communities in the programme area. The strategy is based on three broad objectives.

- 1) The development of confident, creative and capable communities.
- 2) The creation of dynamic and diverse local economies
- 3) Improving the quality of rural community environments

Based on these three objectives, the Coast and Lowland Leader Strategy will deliver outcomes in the form of:

- Improved rural community capacity
- Increased community confidence
- Better skills of the rural workforce
- More entrepreneurial and diverse local economies
- Improved quality of rural community environments

More details can be found at www.leadercoastandlowlands.org.uk

North Pennine Dales

The North Pennine Dales Leader provides an opportunity to make wide ranging and sustainable changes within the area. This will be achieved by developing sustainable economic opportunities, building on the existing entrepreneurial culture and generating community cohesion.

The key principles that underpin the North Pennine Dales Leader approach are:

Strategic Fit – ensuring that projects meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Access to Services – Service delivery and support that is accessible to all member of the local community.

Capacity Building – Opportunities for ongoing development and capacity building for stakeholders.

Effective and efficient use of resources – Ensuring value for money, using existing resources and networks, and maximising other sources of investment.

Reducing the bureaucratic burden – Ensuring evidence and audit requirements are met and clearly understood by all participants.

Sustainable Development – Every initiative will be encouraged to embed the principles of sustainable development into their project.

For further information contact Peter Samsom, North Pennines AONB Partnership, via peter@northpenninesaonb.org.uk or 01388 528 801.