

Village Halls Week 2023

Village Halls Week is an annual event organised by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) in celebration of the 10,000+ village halls and community buildings in England. Village Halls Week 2023 will take place between 23rd-29th January and will celebrate how village halls provide warm, welcoming and inclusive spaces for all.

Community First supports 180+ village halls and community buildings in Wiltshire through the Wiltshire Village Halls Association Network (WVHA). We will be promoting Village Halls Week across our channels throughout the week and also encouraging halls and buildings to get involved holding a coffee morning, afternoon tea or soup and roll lunch as a fundraiser or get together. It is hoped that these events will help to showcase events and activities in village halls and community buildings and explain how trustees are working to make their hall warm, welcoming and inclusive. This is especially important as vulnerable members of our communities feel the impact of the current energy crisis.

Warm Spaces (Village Halls)

The following village halls/community buildings have offered their venue as a Warm Space this winter:

- Ashton Keynes Village Hall (Swindon)
- Bradenstoke Village Hall (Chippenham)
- Edington Parish Hall (Westbury)
- Fovant Village Hall (Salisbury)
- Lansdowne Hall (Derry Hill)
- Rushall and Charlton Village Hall (Pewsey)

Impact of Energy Costs on Village Halls

Community First recently surveyed the WVHA network to find out what impact the increase in energy costs is having on halls and buildings locally. 114 member halls and buildings responded to the survey, which represents 61% of membership. Top level findings from the survey suggest that halls and buildings remain resilient despite increased energy costs and wider cost of living pressures. Despite this, there are future challenges ahead with fixed-term energy deals coming to an end and halls who are currently dipping into their reserves to stay afloat.

95% of halls/buildings will stay open throughout the winter, with 5% at risk of full or partial closure. This includes 2 halls who may close completely and 9 halls considering reduced opening hours. The primary motivation behind potential hall closures is the cost of heating the hall, including the cost of oil, electricity costs and other operational costs. 3 halls/buildings in Wiltshire are at permanent risk of closure due to increased costs.

The majority of halls (56%) are unable to offer a Warm Space this winter and whilst the cost of heating is a factor in this decision, many halls said that regular bookings prevent them from offering a warm space for the community. 8 halls/buildings will be offering a warm space (see above) and have been directed to the Wiltshire Council website to register their venue as a warm space. 42 halls/buildings are considering offering a Warm Space but do not yet have definitive plans. Community First will liaise with these halls and buildings should they require any additional advice or support.

The full results from our survey can be found on our website, we have also created an infographic with a summary of the findings which has been shared with ACRE and the WVHA network.

<https://www.communityfirst.org.uk/news/wiltshire-village-halls-impact-of-energy-costs-survey-2022>

Minibus Driver Awareness Training (MiDAS)

MiDAS is a membership-based scheme designed to enhance both driving and safety standards for drivers of minibuses. MiDAS is a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers. Community First is now taking new bookings for MiDAS minibus training with our Training Coordinator Martin Carter. Martin is a retired Police Advanced Driver with over 35 years' experience of driving minibuses.

The MiDAS training course includes a session on how to operate a minibus safely. This is followed by a 30-minute multiple choice assessment with 20 questions. Trainees will need to answer 16 questions correctly to pass the theory test. Finally, there will be a practical test which incorporates a driving skills training session and an assessment drive which will last just over an hour, with the assessment taking 30 minutes. Upon completion of the theory and practical test, trainees will receive a certificate which is valid for 4 years.

MiDAS training pricing is based on a minimum group size of 3 drivers per booking and starts at £105.00 per person. For more information or to reserve a training slot, please contact Martin Carter:

mcarter@communityfirst.org.uk

Bold – Creative Design & Development Services

Bold is a creative design and marketing agency service from Community First. We offer professional creative services including print and digital design, branding, website design and bespoke campaigns. Bold is a marketing service designed especially for small businesses, charities, community groups and voluntary organisations and our rates are always affordable, at typically half the rate of commercial agencies.

We believe good design shouldn't cost the earth, that's why we're proud to offer quality, affordable creative services to small businesses, charities, voluntary organisations and community groups. We are passionate about helping our clients to harness the power of design to promote their cause and make local communities better places to live and work.

So, whether we're building WordPress websites that look great and are easy to use and keep updated, or designing a brand identity from the ground up, we use the latest technology, tools and techniques you'd expect from a creative design agency.

What's more when you work with Bold you are helping to support vibrant communities and brighter futures for the people who live and work in Wiltshire and Swindon. All of the funds raised through this unique creative design service are used to support the charitable aims of Community First.

For more information email: bold@communityfirst.org.uk

FREE Community Organising Training

Community First is offering FREE Community Organising training as part of a project to recruit new volunteers for Link Schemes and Community Minibus Groups. This course is ideal for anyone who is interested in engaging with members of their community, with the aim of creating or supporting exciting projects. You will be introduced to the foundations of Community Organising and Listening Training, which will give you the tools to recruit new volunteers or develop new ideas for your group.

Community First Update

During this course you will explore:

- What community organising is
- The importance of listening to build relationships and uncover barriers
- How to motivate people to take action
- How to take your next steps to recruit volunteers

The course is free and will take place at the Community First office (Unit C2, Beacon Business Centre, Hopton Park, Devizes, SN10 2EY) on the following dates:

- 18th January 2023
- 22nd February 2023
- 15th March 2023

For more information or to reserve your training place, please contact Samantha Lloyd:
sloyd@communityfirst.org.uk or telephone 01380 732800

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9th December 2022