

Action

The newsletter of Action in rural Sussex
Issue N° 14
April 2009

The champion of rural communities in Sussex



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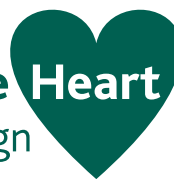
The Richmond Award – Page 10

Smaller and smaller pockets

When government is deciding where to target its spending it increasingly does so by focusing on those areas where large numbers of people are in need of help.

The 10%, or sometimes 20%, of small neighbourhoods that have a large proportion of people who are disadvantaged are picked out for special help. Of course **this is right and fair**, as far as it goes. However, a much larger number of people who need help live in the remaining 80% of villages, hamlets and urban neighbourhoods. These people, and the communities in which they live, are often rural and isolated but get no additional help. **This is not right and not fair**. We call this the 'rural share of disadvantage' and we know it to be large, hidden and only just coming onto the political radar. Which political party will make this a priority over the next 18 months?

Village Heart Campaign



In this edition we launch our major campaign project that will be a focus for our attention over the next 18 months. It is called the 'Heart of the Village

Campaign' and seeks to get recognition and support for rural community buildings and those people who have taken on the voluntary role of managing and running these facilities for the benefit of their communities. This has been a mainstay of the work undertaken by AirS for many years and we feel that the time has come to provide a clear message about how important these facilities are within villages and how much more support is needed, both within those villages, and more importantly from decision-makers and policy-formers.

Jeremy Leggett

Chief Executive, Action in rural Sussex (AirS)

Turn to p 4 to read the Chief Executive's Open Letter

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Village Heart Campaign

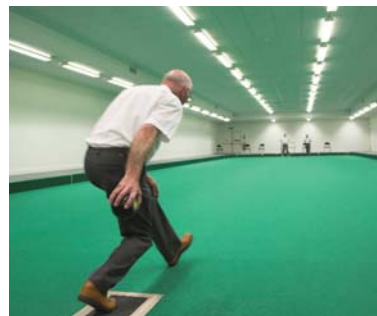
Rural community buildings come in all shapes, ages and sizes. However one thing is common to them all – they are essential for the vitality and vibrancy of community life. In most cases we are talking about a village hall but we could also be talking about a community-owned shop, the church hall, a community-owned 'pub', a converted school building or classroom, or community office or room.

In many Sussex villages there is only one meeting place. If this closes, or deteriorates to the point that it can no longer be used, the community itself begins to die. People are forced to go elsewhere for clubs, organisations and services and the loss of a local meeting place means that vulnerable people become increasingly isolated and socially invisible. Even in these days of instant communications community buildings remain essential for social and community networking as well as for the delivery of local services and facilities.

The work to keep these buildings functioning and in a state of good repair often falls to a few individuals. These facilities are usually established as a local charitable trust or maybe an Industrial and Provident Society, where the trustees and management committee have responsibility for the running and management of the hall. These volunteers take on their roles in an increasingly complex legislative and regulatory framework. For many it is a passion and a way of contributing something to society, but all have found the 'red tape' and increasingly complex legislation burdensome and a cause of stress and anxiety. Yet we should be celebrating and supporting these individuals in equal measure as they are the backbone to the volunteering effort in many villages. They are often unsung heroes within their own communities, taking on responsibilities that most would shy away from. Add to these individuals the many, many volunteers who run clubs, organisations and services from a typical village hall, or who volunteer in a community shop and you will begin to get an idea of the number of people who get involved and give up their time because there is a community building in the village.

Key Messages

1 2



A meeting place at the heart of the community is essential to maintain the vitality and vibrancy of rural communities.

The public sector must support this unique function and role.

The number and range of small voluntary and community organisations that are supported through the existence of the building in each village is significant. The building is essential if these activities and services are to continue. The development and support for new services and activities by public bodies, which also provide vital income towards the maintenance and future development costs, should be encouraged.



The people running community buildings are the heart of the community –

undertaking work to keep the community building functioning and fit for purpose against a background of increasing legislative requirements. More people are needed to assist with this task. The burden of bureaucracy needs to be minimised.

Many people within rural communities do not fully understand or appreciate the work undertaken on their behalf by the committees and trustees. Local recognition for this work will result in increased understanding and support and lead to increased recruitment to help with the running of the community building.

3 4 5



Action in rural Sussex (AirS) runs a Community Building Support Service which provides professional, legal and technical support to local management committees. These committees say that this service is essential to them. To meet these needs and to provide a comprehensive service across Sussex requires increased funding from government and local authorities.

The service provided by AirS has been eroded over recent years and some funding is short term. Current funding is not adequate to provide a responsive and comprehensive service across Sussex. AirS needs support in its quest to ensure that the service is retained and reinstated to the level required by the local management committees.



Rural community buildings will not survive without a dedicated national funding programme to ensure that improved standards are maintained.

Multi-purpose rural community buildings are existing examples of community-owned assets. They are usually owned in charitable trust by the community. There is usually only one such building in a rural community that provides a multitude of different services and has potential to do so much more. While these buildings can often cover their running costs and minor improvements, major capital projects are beyond their resources. A national dedicated building fund is required to assist with refurbishment, modernisation and major rebuild projects.



Parish or town councils should raise funds through the precept to fully support the building and the work of the community building committees.

Many of the services, organisations and activities are for the direct benefit of the local community and add to the self-sufficiency of the community. The parish council has a role to play, as the democratically elected body, in being at the forefront of support for the community building.

The new Power of Well-being recently granted to parish councils will make it easier for them to provide financial support for community buildings where they are providing essential services and facilities.

(See the article on the Power of Well-being on p 12.)

Facts & Figures

There are over **208** community buildings known to AirS.

169 are members of the Village Halls Subscription service within Sussex.

There are **8** community shops.

There are at least **4** privately-owned village shops that have a community meeting room, noticeboard and café facility within them.

There are **9** Hallmark Village Halls within Sussex – an accredited quality standard.

At the end of 2008, AirS is aware of over **60** village halls currently seeking capital grant funding.

There have been **7** successful Big Lottery applications awarded in rural East Sussex and West Sussex over the last two years.

AirS will be able to provide an up-to-date study of the state of village halls in East and West Sussex in the next newsletter, following analysis of the National Village Halls Survey that has just been completed.

Open letter from AirS Chief Executive



This month Action in rural Sussex (AirS) is launching its 'Heart of the Village' Campaign. There are two main reasons for this:

- 1 To celebrate the investment from an enormous number of people within rural communities across Sussex who provide local buildings and facilities.
- 2 To call for action from key decision-makers and funders to help ensure that this work continues into the future.

There are very hard times ahead for the people who rely on a wide range of essential public services. For those of us who are not part of local government it would be all too easy to forget that these will also be very difficult times both for the people who are politically accountable for those services and the people who are employed to manage and deliver them. It is easy to criticise; much harder to take the difficult decisions.

However, it is even more important that when hard decisions are made, they are the right ones. It would be very easy for a 'bunker mentality' to prevail

and for public organisations to focus exclusively on achieving their own specific goals, and to do so on their own. In our experience this can mean that isolated and disadvantaged people in rural areas quickly lose out; as services are withdrawn to urban centres with the intention of saving money.

The alternative is to find increasingly innovative ways in which, by working with others, services can be maintained more efficiently in rural areas. This means joining together with other public sector organisations to provide services in local communities; it means engaging with communities in order to

draw out hidden resources and talent from within and, critically, it means investing in community facilities, especially local village halls.

Investing jointly in rural communities, often working alongside parish or town councils, will bring better value for money, more joined up services and the creation of a beating heart in every village. A strong Village Heart will help to sustain rural communities, and especially their more disadvantaged members, through these difficult times.

Jeremy Leggett,
Chief Executive Officer,
Action in rural Sussex

What a useful resource!

Here are some common uses for the typical village hall and other community buildings.

Social and recreational

Theatre, films and art exhibitions
Keep-fit, pilates, shortmat bowls, badminton
Cookery clubs
Heritage, photography, conservation meetings and events
Quizzes, bingo, bridge
Dances, concerts
Village fetes, jumble sales, celebration events
Clubs for all ages

Service provision

Toddler groups, childcare, out of school clubs and play schemes, youth clubs
Adult education, classes, coaching
Computer clubs, internet access
Health services, doctors' surgeries, clinics, check-ups, screening
Mobile post office, Post Office-type services, village shop, fair trade supplies
Job club, CAB surgery, Small business advice
Volunteer recruitment, training and advice
Lunch clubs, respite care clubs, facilities and service advice for older people

Fundraising

For local and national charities, events, campaigns

Voluntary activities

Volunteer opportunities and recruitment

Local democracy

Polling station
Parish council meetings
Councillors' surgeries
Planning enquiries

Family and village celebrations

Weddings, christenings, birthdays, funerals
Local and national anniversaries/celebrations

Community-owned shop additional services

Post Office services
Café and meeting place, networking
Volunteering opportunity
Local produce and local advertising opportunities
Community noticeboard
Library book/DVD pick up

Disused school classroom

Parish council meetings
Adult education
Clubs and organisations
Internet access, computer club
Events, exhibitions, library services
Noticeboards, information centre
Library book/DVD pick up

Where would these local activities take place if the village hall was not there?

A typical Village Hall meeting...

Based on an original article produced by colleagues in the south west



Illustration © Chris Watson 2009

The **campsite owner** picks up his jacket and strolls down to the village hall. On his way he is joined by the **local builder**, who has just pulled up after a long day's work, and then by a **neighbour** as she alights from the bus on her way back from work. At the hall there are four others, who have left a hurried meal, to attend the monthly meeting of the Hall's **Management Committee**. The chairman opens the meeting by welcoming a **new volunteer** to the committee who is going to help with the **booking system and accounts**. He has just moved to the village and did a similar job in his previous village.

The **bookings secretary** reports a booking for Tuesday evenings for a **yoga class** – an income of £12.75 a week, filling an empty slot. The bookings are looking good for the next couple of months and hopefully, as a result of a few **weekend bookings**, which earn the most money, there will be enough surplus to buy a **new carpet** for the entrance hall. One of the

committee members reports that he has now spent an afternoon at the local pub learning how to **clean beer lines** in the bar and has also organised an **ordering system for bar supplies** with the pub. He remarks that he now has the option for a second career as a pub landlord!

"It is a real community effort, but we always need new volunteers as some of us are past our sell-by date."

Talk turns next to the **Fun Day** planned for next month. It is always a good **fundraiser** and has developed into an **annual event** for the whole village. It is hard work though, and some last-minute issues need to be sorted. Several members agree to run the **tombola stall**, others offer to **bake cakes** for the refreshments stall, one offers her services doing **face painting**. A **bouncy castle** has been hired at a special rate and it is hoped that this will be an added attraction to **young families**. Prizes for the **raffle** have been donated and the Chairman thanks

"I enjoy being a member of the committee – however the increased bureaucracy and regulations is becoming a real worry."

Member of village hall committee

members who have collected prizes from local businesses and shops. There has been a good response and the raffle will be one of the main attractions of the day. Everyone is pleased that the village has responded so well.

The main part of the meeting is devoted to reviewing the **Health and Safety Audit** and ensuring that work is in hand to meet the requirements on the committee to **reduce risks**. All are increasingly aware that this aspect of the committee's work seems to be taking more and more time and expense. A **scaffolding tower** is having to be purchased because it is no longer permissible to use a ladder to access the ceiling or the lights, which need changing regularly.

"Village halls and community centres are essential for sporting and recreational activities and can also act as venues for childcare and other essential services... the management of village halls by the local community can help to build community capacity."

The State of the Countryside, 2001

The **compulsory testing of the electrical circuits and appliances** is due next month and someone will need to be around one day next month when the **Fire Officer's Inspection** is taking place.

The **campsite owner** is responsible for **grant applications** and has spent some time getting quotes for a **stair lift** to the upstairs meeting rooms. A **surveyor** will be inspecting the premises on Tuesday and someone is needed to show him around. Each grant application takes a lot of time but all agreed that **disabled access** is very important and an application is being submitted to the **District Council**. They know that there is strong **competition and limited funds** available.

The Chairman reminds them of the continued need for ideas on **fundraising** as currently the income from lettings barely covers the bills, especially with **increased heating and lighting charges** over the winter months. Before bringing the meeting to a close, she asks if everyone can join her on a **painting weekend** to repaint the meeting room walls. It won't take long if they all help out and she'll supply lunch. She will produce a rota...



Landlords Andy and Lynn McFarlane with Amber Rudd and Rother MP Greg Barker

Westfield Community Hub

The Westfield Community Hub is an example of what a community can do even if it has no village hall or meeting place. AirS has been involved with Westfield in assisting with the implementation of its Action Plan and this 'Hub in the Pub' project is a good example of local people working to provide a community facility. Below is the report received from the project team.

The Westfield Community Hub Launch took place on Saturday 4 April at The Old Courthouse, Main Road, Westfield, and over 140 local residents came along to find out what The Hub in the Pub will be offering the local community. The Hub is a development from the Westfield Local Action Plan, produced in 2006 in which over 400 people said there should be a central meeting place for the community.

As well as tea, coffee and light refreshments, there was a raffle in aid of local charities which raised £147. There are information racks and notice boards for advertising local events and a variety of books

for an exchange scheme. Also, time can be booked on the computer equipment, printer, scanning and photocopying facilities. There is Broadband access too.

The first regular weekly session took place on Friday 10 April, and are scheduled for every Friday morning, starting at 10am. The Good Friday event

included face painting and a live statue in order to attract younger people so that the Hub can start to provide for their needs as well.

Some external agencies have already been approached to find out whether they would be interested in providing outreach services at the Community Hub. East Sussex Library Service staff visited in April to raise awareness of the wide variety of services that can be accessed through the Library and the internet.

Questionnaires returned at the Launch suggested that sessions by the Citizens Advice

Bureau, pensions and benefits advice, health practitioners and the Community Police would be welcomed. Training will also be offered to those who have requested help with using the computers. Offers of help were made at the Launch to provide a form filling service and a tax advice session. There was a strong lobby for a business directory.

21 people have put their names forward to help provide the Hub's services each week and those attending the Launch were very excited by the Hub's development.

Mr Greg Barker, MP for Rother, who attended the Launch, said "This is one of the happiest events I have attended for a while".



For more details, contact Patricia Marston 07531 766830 or email westfield.hub@homecall.co.uk www.westfield-hub.co.uk

SWOT Analysis

The Sussex Village Halls Advisory Group was asked to provide a SWOT analysis of village halls

S: Strengths

- Owned by the community
- Run by volunteers
- Availability – local convenient facility for many activities and services without recourse to travel by car or public transport
- Inexpensive
- Instrument of social cohesion and well-being

W: Weaknesses

- Organisational complacency about the future
- Inward looking, just covering needs of current users
- Lack of volunteers
- Age of many buildings and facilities
- Lack of marketing of village halls locally and with public sector

O: Opportunities

- Major contributor to local self-sufficiency agenda
- Delivery of more local services
- Well-equipped meeting place for local activities
- Power of Well-being – financing from the parish precept

T: Threats

- Fees not covering running costs and improvement costs, so there is long-term difficulty in staying solvent
- Absence of long-term public sector support for facilities
- Local apathy – problems finding volunteers to help run and manage facility
- Ever increasing levels of bureaucracy imposed by government
- Increased government expectations of the role that village halls should play in delivering services

AirS Village Halls Service

The Village Halls team provides a free email and telephone advice service on all aspects of hall management, such as: problems with buildings; constitution of management committees; licensing; hire charges; widening the use of buildings; insurance; fundraising; loans; legal advice; Grant Aid applications.

We also administer the Hallmark Quality Award Scheme; which is a quality standard scheme for village halls with three levels.

Village hall members also receive a quarterly newsletter with funding news, and new information affecting village halls. We run workshops, information events and conferences during the year.

For further information on any of the Village Hall services we provide please contact Nicola Dudley on 01273 407301 or email nicola.dudley@ruralsussex.org.uk

How YOU can get involved

There are a number of things that you can do to get involved with the AirS Heart of the Village Campaign.

- 1 Go to our website www.ruralsussex.org.uk to find out more details of the Heart of the Village Campaign. There will be regular updates on issues and campaign activities that you can get involved with.
- 2 Register your email address with us so that you can receive email alerts when new material is added to the website.
- 3 Sign our online petition to persuade the government to provide a dedicated fund from the Big Lottery Fund for capital build projects aimed at improving and developing community building facilities in rural areas.
- 4 Send us your stories and case studies, good and bad, about the issues faced by your community in developing and maintaining locally owned community facilities. Please email villageheart@ruralsussex.org.uk.
- 5 Put the date of our **Annual Conference** in your diary – **Fri 6 Nov** – and come along to amplify the messages to decision-makers and to develop the campaign further.
- 6 AirS wants to establish a Village Halls Open Day as a Sussex event in summer 2010. Register with us to receive more information, by emailing villageheart@ruralsussex.org.uk.
- 7 If you are not involved with your community building take the trouble to find out more and see if you can assist.
- 8 Let us know what you think – how the campaign could be improved and what you feel is the most important aspect of the campaign.
- 9 Donate to the campaign so that we can develop our ideas further and provide practical help to encourage people to get involved with community buildings.
- 10 Look out for training and workshop events that will be developed to encourage more volunteers to come forward to help run community buildings by providing them with appropriate skills and knowledge.

For more details on any aspect of the Campaign please contact Teresa Gittins on 01273 405442 or email teresa.gittins@ruralsussex.org.uk



Spotlight on Plumpton

Catherine Jackson from Plumpton's Village Action Plan reports on the recent Green Fair

Several hundred (we quickly stopped counting when the crush got too great) villagers flocked to the Plumpton 'Green' Fair held on 7 March to celebrate the East Sussex village's Village Action Plan.

This was our first big event to give village residents a chance to learn about the work of the Action Plan Teams, which have taken on the task of making the Plan a reality.

The Action Plan, launched last September, is based on a survey of the village's 575 households, seeking their views on a wide range of issues, from housing and public transport to community safety and the environment. The survey drew an incredible 82% response and generated 80+ volunteers who are already ticking off several of its 40 goals.

The Plumpton 'Green' Fair was the idea of the environmental Teams, which cover recycling, footpaths, wildlife and the 'Plumpton Goes Green' environmental campaign. The village hall and car park were packed with stands representing the various Action Plan Teams, local food producers, and groups and organisations offering advice and information on environmental and energy conservation issues. The aim

was to raise awareness of 'green' issues, and also to give local food growers and producers a chance to market their wares.

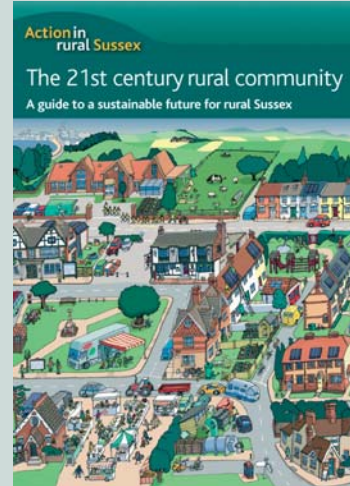
The fair was opened by local MP Norman Baker, who said "I was very impressed by the efforts and organisation that had gone into the Fair. The future for this special community looks bright"

It was a true family event, with children making monsters out of empty tetrapaks, and prizes for the best entries from the village school. Feedback from people visiting the Fair gave a clear thumbs-up for more such events.

"Real community engagement – that's what's going on in Plumpton! It was great to see such a positive outcome from the day. Thanks to the hours of effort put in by so many of Plumpton's Action Plan volunteers, dozens of people have become actively involved in local issues for the first time and they want to see positive changes in the village. It's a great place to live and they think it can be even better."

Tom Hawthorne
Chair of the Village Action Plan Steering Committee, Plumpton resident and Lewes District Councillor

21st century community



Over the last twelve months AirS has been developing a 21st Century community toolkit with the partners within Lewes Rural Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) group called Rural Voices, Rural Choices. This was published in January in a pilot format for testing within Lewes District and for consultation with partners.

The impressive illustration, produced by Chris Watson, a local illustrator based in Hastings, shows a model Sussex village that has projects and initiatives seeking to address the climate change, sustainability and community resilience issues that we are all facing. It concentrates on what communities can do together. The toolkit identifies each of these initiatives within the

illustration and the reasons why the initiative has been developed. Many will be familiar, as these are all based on real projects, many happening within Sussex. Government policy is to reduce CO₂ emissions and this toolkit is providing just the right information in an attractive format for communities to take their own actions.

The impacts of climate change and the diminishing resources of fossil fuels for energy are two of the greatest challenges we will face in the 21st Century.

This illustration, of a community which has joined together to reduce its environmental footprint, offers some ideas for achievable and replicable community action which will help us to meet these 21st Century challenges.

1 Community Car Club
The village has a car club which provides a service for those who do not have a car. The club is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car. The club is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

2 Village Hall
The village hall is a central hub for the community. It provides a space for meetings, events and activities. The hall is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

3 Community Garden
The village has a community garden which provides a space for growing vegetables and flowers. The garden is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

4 Community Hub
The village has a community hub which provides a space for meetings, events and activities. The hub is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

5 Community Centre
The village has a community centre which provides a space for meetings, events and activities. The centre is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

6 Community Shop
The village has a community shop which provides a space for buying local produce. The shop is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

7 Community Farm
The village has a community farm which provides a space for growing vegetables and flowers. The farm is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

8 Community Woodland
The village has a community woodland which provides a space for growing trees. The woodland is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

9 Community Park
The village has a community park which provides a space for recreation. The park is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

10 Community Path
The village has a community path which provides a space for walking. The path is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

11 Community Cycle Path
The village has a community cycle path which provides a space for cycling. The path is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

12 Community Bus
The village has a community bus which provides a service for those who do not have a car. The bus is run by volunteers and provides a service for those who do not have a car.

13 Community Car
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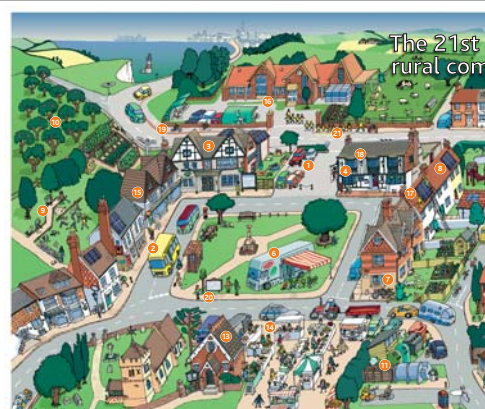
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Community toolkit



The next stage, for which AirS is seeking further funding from local authorities and others, is to provide factheets which a community can use to help them develop these initiatives.

The toolkit was launched and piloted at the highly successful *Plumpton Goes Green* event featured here.

This event is itself a blueprint for how communities could come together to discuss just the issues that are featured in the toolkit.

The illustration and toolkit are soon to be on the AirS website – watch out for their arrival.

1 Community-led ...
2 Community-led ...
3 Community-led ...
4 Community-led ...
5 Community-led ...
6 Community-led ...
7 Community-led ...
8 Community-led ...
9 Community-led ...
10 Community-led ...

West Sussex Rural Forum examines the rural landbased economy (and the effects of the recession)

The West Sussex Rural Forum, organised by the Rural Partnership and chaired by Roger Paterson of Horsham District Council, held its first meeting of 2009 in early March. Parish and town councils, rural interest groups, rural organisations and representatives from the landbased sector were invited to the meeting that was held at Ashington Village Hall.

The Forum took a look across all the landbased sectors – arable, livestock, horticulture and forestry – and looked particularly at current recession issues. It also examined how rural communities could get more involved with supporting local agricultural and woodland businesses.

There were ten conclusions and recommendations from the meeting, which will be developed further by the Rural Partnership at its summer meeting.

1 Agricultural Research and Development functions, funded at a national level, are in danger of being disbanded completely. It is important that the country retains this capacity and function as it has always been important to the future of the sector.

2 Diversification is currently subsidising agricultural production in many areas. As some of the diversification activities suffer because of the recession this may impact on mainstream farming activities.

3 West Sussex is one of the most wooded counties in the country. It is important that the public sector takes the lead in developing a market for the wood produced, perhaps by developing demonstration community heating schemes or similar.

4 There is a key role to be played by public sector procurement in buying local products and produce in order to help the landbased sector (and others). How this can be encouraged needs to be investigated and acted on.

5 It is important that publicity, advice and assistance about current funding programmes, such as Leader, reaches those who would most benefit and who can further develop the local economy.

6 The landscape is a product of the farming, horticulture and forestry industries. Therefore we need to keep farming and also develop wood management initiatives that are sustainable and have long-term benefits.

7 The market towns of the rural areas are the local hubs of industry and commerce. A message to

support local businesses, traders and producers is an important element to help make local businesses viable throughout the supply chain.

8 Market town traders and businesses should be encouraged to work together to undertake promotions and improvements in the high street. We need to promote the 'department store' mentality amongst local traders and support the role of networking through the chambers of commerce.

9 Farmers and growers are currently excluded from the Government Loan Guarantee Schemes and other schemes through a particular interpretation of the EU State Aid Rules. West Sussex Rural Partnership needs to add its voice to those who are lobbying for these rules to be overturned or relaxed.

10 Local economies and local employment must continue to be promoted. There is a danger that once the National Park is established there will be a move away from local employment within its boundaries. This needs to be resisted.

East Sussex Rural Forum

East Sussex Rural Forum met on 21 April and discussed:

- 1 – The economic recession, its impact in rural areas and the role of the Recession Taskforce
- 2 – The Public and Community Transport Strategies currently under review by East Sussex County Council. There will be a full report in the next newsletter.

Village Champions for Youth win top Community Award



Above: The Duke of Richmond (left) with Denise Campbell and Patrick Perks of the Billingshurst Community Partnership

Village volunteers who set up a host of activities for local teenagers have scooped this year's prestigious Richmond Award.

The Billingshurst Community Partnership Ltd (BCP) set up a youth projects team, led by Denise Campbell. They run a weekly youth club at the village hall and have organised a programme of activities from graffiti workshops to dance nights and popular youth band events, known as BilliRox.

Denise also encourages youngsters to volunteer their time for local businesses and community groups with the innovative YES project (Youth Enterprise Scheme). Now up to 24 teenagers spend four hours a week helping out, in exchange for credits for vouchers or day trips of their choice.

The Partnership received their award from the Duke of

Richmond at a celebration event at the village hall on Thursday 2 April 2009. He also presented community service awards to local youngsters, who last year contributed more than 650 hours to BCP youth projects.

The Richmond Award, launched in 2006, is designed to recognise the work of a community or individual considered by AirS staff to have done the most to encourage and ensure that young people remain in their local community. Jeremy Leggett, Chief Executive of AirS, said "Our staff meet people every day who are doing so much to make a difference in their own communities and this is their chance to make due recognition for some of these people."

The Duke, who was President of AirS from 1973 to 2005 said: "Through the work of Action in

rural Sussex, staff come across many examples of good work designed to make sure that rural villages can be places that young people want to stay and build their lives in.

"They also meet people determined to seize the initiative and make a positive contribution in their local community – people like Denise and her colleagues who are not prepared to simply sit on the sidelines and complain about what needs to be done."

The Partnership also sources funding for the programme, attracting grants from AirS, Sussex Police, local housing associations and both Horsham District and West Sussex County Councils, The Lions and Rotary Clubs and Big Lottery Fund.

Denise is now seeking more volunteers to help initiate and

run activities. She said: "It started partly because I have a teenage daughter and I was concerned that there wasn't enough locally for young people to do. We organised a questionnaire to all pupils 16 and under. They told us that they wanted somewhere to meet informally and that one of their top interests was live music.

"We also felt it was important to create opportunities to get youngsters involved and keep them busy helping out, building their confidence and self esteem and creating confidence amongst adults around young people – which is how the YES project was created. I'm so pleased that local businesses have been prepared to take them under their wing."



Meeting Room Hire

The new AirS website has generated a lot of interest in our ground floor meeting rooms. Both are equipped with hearing loops, flip charts and screens for use with projectors or OHPs and can be set up to suit your meeting or event. Sussex House is fully accessible and car parking space can be reserved for disabled visitors. Our charges range from £30 for short meetings to £100 per day. Special rates for charities and community groups are negotiable. For further details or a quotation, please telephone Claire Reynolds or Dawn Brock on 01273 473422 or email: claire.reynolds@ruralsussex.org.uk / dawn.brock@ruralsussex.org.uk

Sussex rural town improvements



HENFIELD

Rural Towns in West Sussex continue to benefit from the SEEDA Small Rural Towns Programme. In addition, funding from West Sussex County Council to AirS to employ the Rural Towns Co-ordinator, Les Ampstead, has provided much-needed support to community partnerships in the eligible towns to make good quality applications for the funding. The SEEDA fund in West Sussex is a total of £465,000 over six years. So far four towns have had successful applications and £250,000 has been allocated. These same projects have attracted matching funds of £1,134,000 in total, from a range of public and private sector sources.

Two of these towns received the funding in 2006/07 and their projects have now been completed.

Henfield was awarded £40,000 in 2006 to purchase a community bus and run a local service that now brings people into the town centre for shopping and other purposes. This service has been highly successful for residents, businesses and town centre services.

Billingshurst made a successful application in 2007 for £120,000. This has provided funding towards the 'Centre for Children'. As well as safeguarding jobs. It has also created six full-time and six part-time jobs and created 24 day-care places. It now provides learning and work experience opportunities locally.

Two towns have benefited in 2008/09 and their work is now underway. In **Pulborough**,



PULBOROUGH



STEYNING

with a grant of £50,000, six shops have been refurbished and five shopkeepers benefited from in-depth training with a retail specialist. The footpath to connect Lower Street with the Glebe Field residential area is due to be completed soon. It is expected that these improvements will contribute to revitalising Lower Street as the alternative shopping hub to the large supermarket that has been built about a mile away from the main shopping area.

At **Steyning**, the bus shelter and toilets have been refurbished in the town centre, providing a much-needed improvement in facilities. There are also 16 new

signs across the town to help visitors locate amenities and places of interest. Next year the project will concentrate on work in the car park to increase the number of spaces.

Projects for **Arundel**, **Midhurst** and **Selsey** are being appraised for delivery in 2009–11. The project in Arundel will focus on setting up two new public pontoons for visiting boats, in order to attract more visitors, and 15 new local signs across the town. Those at Midhurst and Selsey will deliver improvements to High Street shops, training for shop owners and street scene improvements. In addition **Hassocks** and **Hurstpierpoint** are working on schemes for funding in 2010/11.

West Sussex continues to be a major partner in the South East Rural Towns Partnership, which is starting work to secure ongoing funding for the programme supporting rural towns across the South East.

County Co-ordinator
Les Ampstead, 01798 875402,
les.ampstead@ruralsussex.org.uk

South East Rural Towns
Partnership Representative
Ana Fajardo, 01243 777606,
ana.fajardo@westsussex.gov.uk



BILLINGSHURST

The Power of Well-being

By Trevor Leggo, Chief Officer of Sussex Association of Local Councils

This enabling power gives a town or parish council the statutory right to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. Basically, the Power of Well-being, often referred to as the 'Power of General Competence' held by principal authorities since 2000 has now been given to parish and town councils. In these testing times this could provide enormous flexibility for towns and parishes to provide support for their communities; for example financial support for local shops, pubs and post offices, perhaps working with others to provide affordable housing or funding a commercial bus operator to run a late Friday evening service from a cluster of communities. Support for improved health provision locally would also be of interest to some of our councils. At a different level, the parish council can now give grants to individuals or a 'golden handshake' to a valued employee, neither of which has been lawful up to now.

In order to exercise the conferred power, local councils have to be 'eligible'. The details of eligibility were published by government in February and can be summarised as follows:

- At least two thirds of the total number of seats on the council must have been filled by candidates who stood for

Our Sector has been granted the 'Power of Well-being' and in these testing times, this can provide support for our communities.

election at the last ordinary elections.

- The Clerk must be qualified through the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) or the Local Policy qualifications from the University of Gloucester. For Clerks currently holding these qualifications it will be necessary for them to pass the Well-being module now added to CILCA.
- At least 80% of the members of the council must have attended a training event on the Power of Well-being designed as part of the National Training Strategy. Co-opted and appointed councillors can be part of this 80%. In Sussex SALC will be offering this training either within the normal training events or for clusters of councils in various locations.

- Councils must have published a Statement of Intent for Community Engagement, explaining how they will involve persons or organisations interested in the well-being of their areas, e.g. police, health authority, voluntary organisations, businesses, schools and faith groups. The Department of Communities and Local Government guidelines provide an example statement to assist local councils.
- In deciding to use the power the council must be satisfied that the activity is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the town or parish.
- As a matter of good practice the council should also record the fact that it has taken into account the sustainable community strategies of the relevant principal authorities for its area.

For those who like to know the finer points, eligibility is set out in *Statutory Instrument 2008 N° 3095, the 'Parish Councils (Power to Promote Well-being) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2008'*. It is supported by a guidance document produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government and available on NALC and SALC websites – www.nalc.gov.uk and www.sussexalc.org.uk. Councils must have regard to this guidance in exercising the power.

For more information please contact Trevor Leggo 01273 476342 or email trevor.leggo@ruralsussex.org.uk



Food Projects

AirS staff worked with children from Rodmell Primary School to plant several Sussex variety apple trees in the orchard at Monk's House, a National Trust property, which adjoins their school grounds.

A new guide to local producers in the Ardingly area of the High Weald has just been produced in partnership with the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.



Government recognition of the need for sustainable rural communities

The government has given strong support for the Matthew Taylor Review – *Living Working Countryside* (summarised in the last issue) setting out its proposals for helping rural communities to thrive in the 21st century by providing more affordable housing and greater freedom to develop strong local economies.

The measures announced on the 25 March will:

- encourage local authorities and developers to identify 'exception' sites,
- provide a refreshed approach to planning policy that recognises the distinct needs of rural businesses.

In order to facilitate this, the government will publish a new single planning policy statement (PPS) which combines existing policy and guidance on sustainable economic development. Housing Minister Margaret Beckett said: "We simply must take action to overcome the unsustainable pressures facing the future of rural communities".

The government will also publish proposals for taking forward Community Land Trusts, reinforce the importance of masterplanning by local authorities and create a practitioners' working group to explore ways to incentivise landowners to provide land for exception sites. Matthew Taylor MP said: "This is an important day for the countryside... without the action promised by the government today in response to my report, all too often our countryside would face local people priced out, local services closing, and ever fewer and worse paid jobs."

Action in rural Sussex welcomes the government's response and the focus on finding ways in which the Homes and Communities Agency can increase the creation of homes in villages. Jeremy Leggett, Chief Executive of AirS said: "For many rural communities in Sussex there is a very clear understanding that houses are needed to help them remain living places. The independent support that Rural Housing Enablers give helps people take action to achieve this. Contrary to some perceptions, the economic downturn may well create opportunities that could have been hard to exploit before."

The government's response coincides with last month's briefing to government by the Commission for Rural Communities into the effect of the recession on rural housing, which calls for a substantial extension of government commitment to provide affordable housing in rural communities. The report highlights the lack of affordable housing options for the increasing number of rural residents made homeless (rural repossessions rose at nearly double the rate for England as a whole during 2007 and 2008) and the fact that rural affordability is being exacerbated by credit

"For many rural communities in Sussex there is a very clear understanding that houses are needed to help them remain living places."

Jeremy Leggett, AirS

limitations and increased deposit requirements.

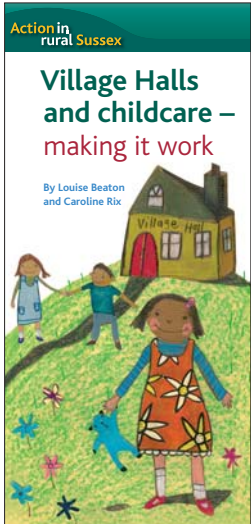
For further information on these reports visit www.ruralsussex.org or contact Rural Housing Enabler Tom Warder on 01273 479008 or email tom.warder@ruralsussex.org.uk

Feedback from last newsletter

- We received many complimentary comments about the last edition particularly about the rural economy articles. Correspondents liked the contributions from individuals that featured in the last edition as they offered a more personal view. Kathy Fordham's article on farming provoked many responses. One reader, having read the article, went to talk to her local farmer and has told us she now understands why he is doing certain things that have caused comments in the village. She says all of these are perfectly understandable and she is letting others know so that they are more supportive and less critical of change in the future.
- The home-based business issue has now been discussed with the Rural Minister and is featuring on the next agenda of the National Rural Forum. If you are a home-based business in the rural Sussex we would be interested to hear from you. Please contact Simon Kiley our research and policy officer – simon.kiley@ruralsussex.org.uk. We would like to know the advantages and disadvantages of home-based working and what support you might need to continue in business and to grow.
- See the update from Tom Warder on rural housing issues and in particular the Taylor Review.
- Both county councils have launched initiatives with their local authority and public sector partners to address the recession issues. In West Sussex this is called 'Keep West Sussex Working' and each local authority is taking combined and individual actions under this campaign banner. In East Sussex the Recession Taskforce is also addressing the same issues and seeking a common approach within the public sector.

Village Halls and childcare – making it work

By Caroline Rix, Rural Childcare Development Officer



Children and young people are the future of their villages. If villages are to remain alive, active and vibrant they will benefit enormously from the continuity and energy children, young people and new families can offer.

First experiences at the local pre-school or playgroup and fundraising events at the local village hall offer great opportunities to meet other children and families. These events offer the start of friendships and the development of community identities between people. At pre-schools/playgroups children can enjoy happy hours playing, creating, learning to share and running

around in safe and secure environments. Pre-schools provide jobs and professional development for local people whilst contributing to the local economy. They also deliver a much-needed service for children and their families.

It is common for pre-schools and nurseries operating in rural villages to be run by voluntary management committees. As legislation, regulation and inspection specifically aimed at childcare has developed, and bearing in mind other forms of legislation that affect childcare (e.g. employment law), voluntary management can be a 'tough call'. Village halls are also run by volunteers and they too have their share of burdensome legislation to navigate.

For many childcare committee members this will be their first volunteering experience and it can come as a shock to many parents to be faced with essentially running a childcare business with the responsibilities of employing staff and managing the finances. However it can also be a great life experience and brilliant for your CV. It can contribute to a greater understanding of the cohesion necessary for the 'heart' of village life and lead to all sorts of other volunteer roles, not least the parish council.

There can be understandable tensions between volunteer childcare committee members and those village hall committee members. Working together, Louise Beaton (AirS Village Halls Advisor) and Caroline Rix have published a guide to help support childcare and village halls entitled *Village Halls and childcare – making it work*. This publication will contribute to a greater understanding of how these community services can be mutually beneficial, whilst dealing with sensible but often onerous regulations.

For a copy contact Nicola Dudley on 01273 407301 or email nicola.dudley@ruralsussex.org.uk



Childcare Management Committee support pack and briefing sessions



In West Sussex, from the middle of June, Caroline Rix will be running briefing sessions about the Childcare Committee Support Pack she has produced. This vital pack, aimed at giving the childcare committee member an instant answer and a further signpost to help, has six sections.

Section One – *The Childcare Management Committee* includes: getting started, childcare committee roles and responsibilities, effective working, understanding the constitution, AGMs, EGMs etc. and becoming and operating as a charity.

Section Two – *Getting it right legally* includes: legal status and structure, legal forms that may be suitable for childcare organisations, legal responsibilities of the childcare committee.

Section Three – *Regulation and regulatory bodies* includes: the Childcare Act 2006 and the Early Years Foundation Stage, Ofsted registration and inspection, Disclosure and the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Charity Commission and the Charities Act 2006, trustee/committee liability.

Section Four – *Running the business* covers: business planning, budgets, cash flow, annual accounts and reporting; the Free Entitlement for three- and four-year-olds, premises, insurance, marketing, fundraising and funding applications.

Section Five – *Employing staff* includes everything to do with being an employer, recruiting, induction, training, appraisal etc.

Section Six – *Assuring quality* concludes the pack with: Ofsted and The Early Years Foundation Stage, policies and procedures, child protection, health and safety and risk assessment, communicating with parents / carers and committee recruitment. Invitations to the briefing sessions will be sent out by West Sussex County Council Early Childhood Service at the beginning of May along with a questionnaire about childcare committee support services. Please respond to the questionnaire; as responses will contribute to the future development of support for childcare committees. Caroline looks forward to welcoming you to the briefing sessions where a copy of the pack will be available for all voluntary-run childcare groups based in West Sussex.

Contact Caroline Rix on 07775 851888 or email caroline.rix@ruralsussex.org.uk



Fortnightly activity evenings at Wivelsfield Green from Tue 28 April

AirS will be holding fortnightly activity evenings on the Green at Wivelsfield Green for young people aged 8–16, taking place from 7–9pm. The first one is on Tuesday 28 April and then every fortnight on a Tuesday. Activities will include sports coaching on a whole host of sports; cricket, football, basketball and a multi-sports evening. There'll also be a climbing wall and hopefully a graffiti workshop on other evenings!

Volunteers wanted

We also need volunteers for these evenings. You just need to enjoy spending time with young people and to be able to spare an evening once a month or so. You need have no sports experience at all as the evenings are run by qualified leaders. They really are a great bunch of young people, so if you could spare a bit of time, they'd love to see you.

For further details please contact Alan Janes on 01444 471201 or Ali Cardosi at AirS on 07825 506661

Research, community surveys, rural policy?

AirS has a long history of undertaking research and survey work across rural Sussex. If you are interested in discussing further please contact Teresa Gittins on 01273 405442 or email teresa.gittins@ruralsussex.org.uk

COMMA: The Community Aggregates Fund 2009–10

Action in rural Sussex is once again delivering the COMMA Communities Aggregates Fund, to benefit communities affected by quarrying. Communities across East and West Sussex can apply for grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 to support community projects and amenities. AirS is delivering this grant on behalf of DEFRA, funded by the aggregates levy on quarries.

How to apply

Applications must be submitted using a COMMA application form, which can be downloaded from www.acre.org.uk/sustainabledevelopment_comma.html and submitted to Action in rural Sussex.

Who can apply?

Five conditions must be satisfied for a project to be eligible:

- The community where the project is based is/has been affected by aggregates extraction.
- The proposed project is within 10 kilometres of an aggregates extraction site, either in current use or disused.
- The proposed project will produce a community benefit.
- The applicant must be a community organisation, charity or a parish/town council.
- The project must be capable of completion by the end of 31 March 2010.

Time scales

Open to application Monday 30 March 2009
Deadline for completed applications 5 June 2009
Approved applications informed W/c 3 August 2009
Projects must be completed by 31 March 2010

Previous awards

In 2008/2009 the COMMA grants programme awarded grants totalling £434,300, to 47 organisations across England of which three were in Sussex and totalled £17,900. Northchapel Village Hall Trust, Northchapel, Chichester, West Sussex received £3,500 for improvements to their flooring. Hampers Green Community Centre, Petworth, West Sussex received £7,500 to enable them to replace their heating system. Westfield Community Drop-In, Rother, East Sussex received £6,900 to develop their community drop-in centre.

For further information please contact:
Liz Allsobrook, Development Officer
on 01273 405454
or email Liz.Allsobrook@ruralsussex.org.uk

New members of staff



Scott Lipa

Heralding from Brisbane Australia, Scott gained qualifications in Government and Social Policy Studies and has twelve years' third sector experience both in Australia and in East Sussex. In this time Scott has gained specialist experience in employment and training services for people with disabilities, youth offending, substance misuse and young peoples services. "I have been well aware of the work AirS undertakes before joining them and the scope and breadth of AirS' work is most impressive. In difficult economic times its work is even more important today than ever before and I look forward to further assisting rural people and communities as part of the dedicated AirS team."



Shahnaz Zarif

Shahnaz is our new research officer. She graduated from Sussex University last June with a BA in History. Before coming to AirS she managed a small cinema in Brighton, The Duke of Yorks, where she specialized in social media, marketing and events management. Shahnaz – pronounced 'shar-naz' – enjoys science fiction and reading and lives in Brighton with her cat.

Proofreader wanted

Does the grammar and punctuation in *Action* set your teeth on edge? Could you spare a few hours once every three months to proofread a PDF before it goes to press? If so, contact Teresa Gittins at the email address below.

Next edition...

The next edition is due out in July 2009.

If you know of anyone or any organisation who might wish to receive this newsletter please contact the editor:

Teresa Gittins

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Action in
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Fax: 01273 483109

Forthcoming events

Mon 11 May – Healthier Chichester Partnership

Reducing Isolation Action Group day out on the solar boat. For people living in the area around Graftham, East Lavington, Duncton, Sutton, Bignor and Bury.

For more information contact Susie Brown 07792 903236

Wed 20 May, 10am–12.30pm – Licensing Workshop

West Chiltington Village Hall – a free workshop with refreshments available. For further information please contact Nicola Dudley 01273 407301 or email nicola.dudley@ruralsussex.org.uk

Wed 27 May – Healthier Chichester Partnership

Reducing Isolation Action Group day at Dell Quay for people living in Southbourne, Westbourne and Stoughton

For more information, contact: Susie Brown 07792 903 236

Tue 2 June – West Sussex Rural Forum, 9.30am–1pm

Ashington Village Hall

Addressing community responses to climate change issues.

For more information contact Claire Reynolds 01273 407305

Wed 3 June–13 July – Incredible Years Parenting Training

The Hillcrest Centre, Newhaven BN9 9EA

A free 12 week parenting training course for Mums and Dads with creche facilities. For more information or to book a place, please call or text: Sashka Dunlop on 07969614774 or Judy Gerhold on 07968 715105 or email: copes@ruralsussex.org.uk

Healthier Chichester Partnership Activities

Tue 9 June – Reducing Isolation Action Group Day Out at Dell Quay for people living in the Midhurst area.

Mon 22 June – Reducing Isolation Action Group Day Out at Dell Quay for people living in or around Chichester.

Wed 24 June – Reducing Isolation Action Group Day Out at Dell Quay for people living in Lavington.

For more information contact Susie Brown on 07792 903236

Fri 11 September, 1.30pm – East Sussex Rural Forum

The Reid Hall, Boreham Street, Wartling

For information, email claire.reynolds@ruralsussex.org.uk

Fri 6 November

Action in rural Sussex AGM and Annual Conference and SALC AGM

Village Heart
Campaign

At the South of England showground, Ardingly The AirS and SALC AGMs will be in the morning. The AirS Annual Conference will be in the afternoon, after lunch. More details will be available in June. Check the website then, or contact Natalie Simpson on 01273 407330 or email natalie.simpson@ruralsussex.org.uk