**Rural charities celebrate 100 years of village halls**

**Village Halls Week 2021 will recognise the contribution England’s 10,000+ halls have made to rural communities since the 1920s**

The campaign week - now in its 4th year – is set to take place 25 to 29 January and will feature online events, videos, podcasts, and blogs showcasing the history of village halls and the benefits they have derived for rural communities over the years.

The initiative is being led nationally by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and echoed by the 38 county-based rural development charities which make up the ACRE Network.

Deborah Clarke, ACRE’s Rural Evidence and Village Halls Manager said, *“The past year has been one of the most challenging periods for village halls on record. Many closed due the government’s coronavirus restrictions, yet the volunteers who manage these buildings applied for emergency funding and put in place Covid Secure measures so they could carry on providing a safe space for their community when it was most needed. Village Halls Week 2021 is in many ways, a celebration of the fact these halls are true survivors!”*

Managed by volunteers, England’s 10,000+ village and community halls support a diverse range of community activities from exercise classes to coffee mornings and are routinely hired out for private parties and weddings. Some host community shops and post offices.

In a [survey](https://acre.org.uk/news/2020-10-13-extent-of-rural-economic-and-social-benefits-from-village-and-community-halls-revealed) undertaken by ACRE last year, it was found that 60% of village halls provide the only meeting space in the local community. An estimated 50,000 individuals too are reliant on the use of village halls to make a living.

Phillip Vincent, Public Affairs and Communications Manager said, *“The current national lockdown means we are having to doing things differently for Village Halls Week 2021. This will be an online affair but there’s still good opportunity for village halls to get involved and join us in celebrating all the work they do. We’ve published a programme that invites people to join online events, share stories on social media and sign a ‘doomsday book’ which will be a record of village halls in their centenary year.”*

The campaign is being generously sponsored by Utility Aid, Norris and Fisher and Allied Westminster and is also featuring contributions from the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF).

Information about Village Halls Week 2021, including a programme is available from ACRE’s [website](https://acre.org.uk/our-work/village-halls-week.php).