

Village halls boosted by £1.2 million to rejuvenate community hubs

Village halls in England have received £1.2 million through a government funding scheme, helping these community hubs make vital refurbishments to continue the invaluable role they play in rural communities.

So far, grants for 21 projects have been approved as part of the [£3 million Village Halls Improvement Grant Scheme](#) launched in April 2019. Improvements include repairs to roofs, refurbishments to toilets and kitchens and new meeting rooms.

The announcement was made at the start of Village Halls Week, a national campaign running from Monday 20 January to Sunday 26 January. The campaign celebrates the services that village halls provide in rural communities across England, and will involve events at 650 village halls across the country.

With more than 10,000 village halls across the country, these spaces provide vital hubs for communities to come together, collaborate and celebrate. Many halls provide a space for shops, cafes, pop up pubs, nurseries and doctors.

The celebrations will be marked in a speech by Defra Rural Affairs Minister Lord Gardiner at an event in Westminster today (20 January).

Defra Rural Affairs Minister Lord Gardiner said:

Village halls are an essential part of rural life. I am delighted that our grant scheme is helping to refurbish our nation's village halls, and each and every one will make a real difference to their communities.

There can be no doubt that village halls are more important and relevant than ever. Village Halls Week provides a perfect opportunity for people up and down the country to celebrate these wonderful places at the heart of our rural community.

Through the government's grant scheme, run by charity organisation Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), village hall committees are able to [apply for grants of up to £75,000](#) towards refurbishment and alteration of their buildings.

David Emerson CBE, Chair, ACRE:

We are delighted to manage the Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund and have been overwhelmed with the fantastic response from halls.

The impact of the grants are huge and will make a great difference to rural communities. Village Halls Week is the perfect time to celebrate the new facilities rural communities can now enjoy.

On Friday, Lord Gardiner will visit Westleton Village Hall in Suffolk, which has received £75,000 to transform a much loved but well-worn village hall into a warm and inviting community centre. The building will be refurbished while a new foyer café will be available to local residents and the many ramblers, dog walkers, cyclists, runners and tourists that visit the village each year.

Anne Layton, volunteer, Westleton Village Hall:

Almost the whole community has a stake in our village hall, and we have called on skills from so many people to make this project happen. We host many activities such as film club, exercise groups and community meals, and now with this vital government funding we will be able to do much more.

Without our village hall, many people in our community would be very lonely, and we can now bring even more people together.

The announcement comes on the same day of the annual report on the government's Loneliness Strategy, which sets out the approach to tackling loneliness in England. With the help of government funding, village halls across the country are helping to increase community cohesion, while reducing isolation and loneliness.

Further information

- The Village Halls Improvement Grant Scheme was announced in the 2018 budget as part of £8 million made available to help with the cost of repairs and alternations to community buildings (village halls, miners' welfare facilities, Armed Forces veterans' facilities) to mark the centenary of the Armistice.
- Funding covers 20% of the total costs of a project. The remaining funding comes from a combination of charity reserves, fundraising, local authority funding and other grants such as the [National Lottery Community Fund](#).
- The application must be a village hall or similar rural community building and a registered charity. New build projects will not be eligible to apply to the fund due to their high costs and long timescales.
- Applications will be assessed by a panel including Defra officials and [Action with Communities in Rural England \(ACRE\)](#) staff with extensive experience of halls and grant schemes. The grant funding will be managed by ACRE on behalf of Defra and advice and support to potential applicants will be provided through the ACRE network.
- [Applicants can apply for grants by following this link.](#)