

21st Century Hall Audits

Summary of findings from CCBs
village hall audits: January 2024



21st Century Hall Audits: what have we learned?

39 hall audits completed

We estimate there are around 120 village halls or rural community halls in Berkshire.

CCB has around 80 member Halls at any one time.

We have done audits with just under half of our member halls so far, with more scheduled for the next couple of months.

62% of audits were with West Berkshire Halls, 26% with Wokingham Halls, 8% with Windsor and Maidenhead Halls, 2% with Reading Halls, 2% with Slough Halls and none to date with Halls in Bracknell.

82% of halls audited are charities, including one with the Parish Council acting as sole trustee. 17% of halls audited are owned and managed by Parish Councils.

This is roughly representative of the proportion of Charity/Parish Council owned halls in rural Berkshire

82% of Hall Committees own the freehold of the hall, and 17% are leaseholders.

The length and type of lease have implications for the kinds of changes to halls that committees can make and the funding they can access.

A large proportion of audited halls need work done to bring them up to modern thermal insulation standards.

- 33 halls need more roof insulation
- 27 have uninsulated or poorly insulated walls
- 28 halls have poorly or uninsulated floors



21st Century Hall Audits

Village Halls in Berkshire come in a great variation of building ages, types and condition from 1980s prefab to ornate 17th century halls. They present a wide range of challenges for the volunteers who look after them! The unifying features of these facilities are their importance in their communities and the commitment of the people who look after them. Halls we have audited so far include some of the following:

- great-shefford burdwood sunningdale
- frank-hutchins california-association morrell-room
- west-ilsley peasemore bradfield
- colnbrook burghfield pangbourne
- charvil thatcham hare-hatch
- cheapside sulhampstead beenham john-cumber twyford
- purley-on-thames farley-hill aldermaston
- sutton pinder acland croft-hall grazeley
- finchampstead emmbrook lambourne beech-hill
- chieveley st-paul's spencers-wood east-garston
- shaw-cum-donnington padworth
- hungerford



Using and Saving Energy

Hall Management Committees are making efforts to reduce their energy use. Here are some of the things they are doing:

- Putting heating systems on timers so that heating comes on when the hall is in use and go off when its not
- Asking hirers to switch off lights when they leave the room - verbally and with signs
- Using thermostats to ensure rooms don't overheat
- Reminding hall users to close doors, fitting door closers, and draft excluders

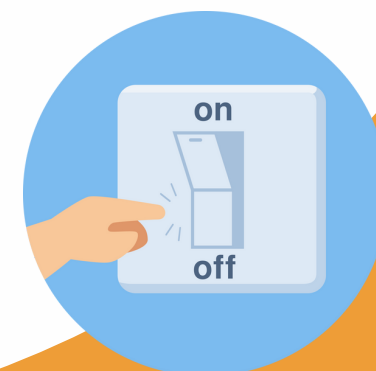
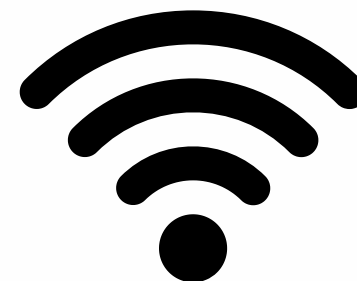
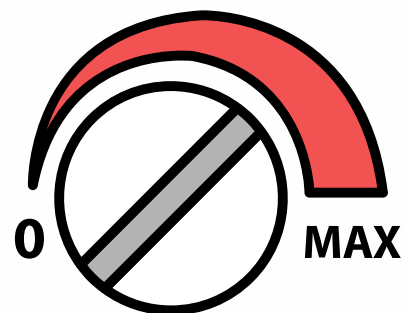
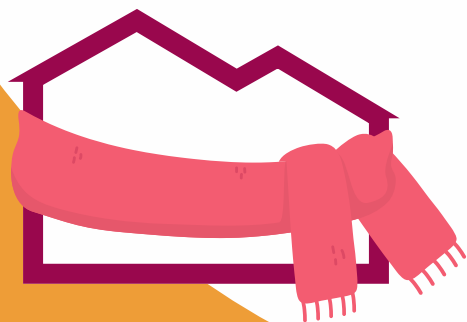
These are examples of free and low cost ways to make an impact on reducing energy use, bills and carbon emissions.

However, for many halls mechanical issues with heating equipment, old lighting systems and bulbs, and lack of insulation can greatly reduce the impact of these measures.

For example:

- around 20% of halls we audited have heating that is **not** thermostatically controlled, and of those halls which are, we found 6 have thermostats which are **not working** as they should do.
- 33% of halls audited do not have broadband, which means committees cannot take advantage of heating control apps which would allow them to match heating and lighting to times when their hall is being used.

Overheating the hall and/or use energy when there is no one using the space can be very expensive!



Consulting with hall users and the local community

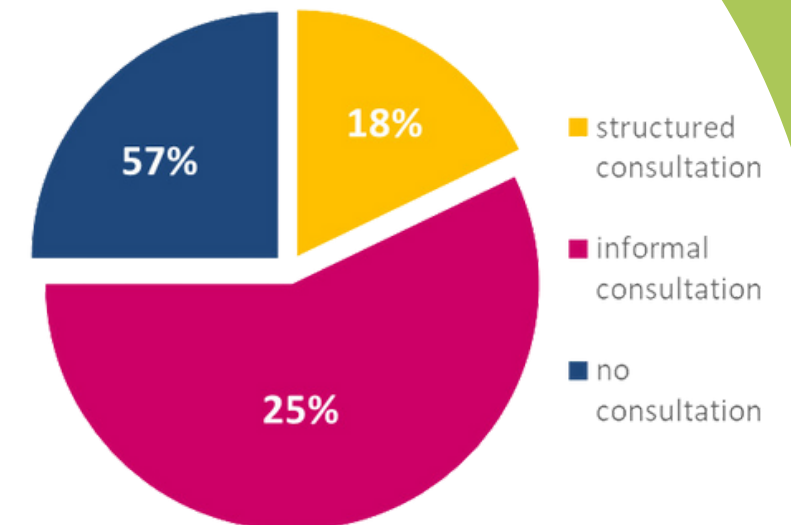
Most of the hall committees we audited gathered informal or ad-hoc feedback from hall users and/or the wider community. This kind of feedback is often received when dealing with bookings, at parish council meetings, or in Facebook comments

Just under a quarter of committees had undertaken more structured consultation activities, such as circulating questionnaires, or holding consultation meetings.

Over a quarter of hall committees reported that they did not gather any feedback from hall users or their wider community.

Changes and improvements to community facilities like village halls are more likely to be impactful if they are informed by the needs and wishes of those who use them. Views can be gathered in a wide range of ways, but doing a structured community or user consultation can have the following benefits:

- A chance to think about which specific questions you want to ask, rather than leaving it to people to tell you what is on their mind as and when you encounter them.
- Funders frequently want to know whether the project or activity you are applying to them for is wanted and needed by the people in your community.
- Planning and carrying out a community consultation can be an opportunity for committees to reflect on who uses the hall, who lives in the local community, and how best to engage with them.
- An opportunity to engage with members of your community who might not otherwise use the hall or consider getting involved - **and great chance to attract interest and potential new trustees!**



Ensuring the hall is accessible to everyone who might want or need to use it

Most of the halls we have audited so far have some accessibility provision in place, and some halls have really comprehensive facilities:

- 82% had a disabled/accessible toilet
- 89% had ramp access
- 71% had baby changing facilities

We know these percentages have already increased as some committees we have spoke to say they have improved their accessibility features since their audit took place. However that still leaves a number of halls which do not have these facilities for people with disabilities or for young families.

There is a great deal that committees can do to make sure their hall is accessible and comfortable for the whole community, attract new hirers and increase bookings!

Some questions to consider include:

Are there any groups of people who do not use the hall or choose to go elsewhere? What is the reason?

Are the toilets and changing areas heated adequately?

Is the hall 'dementia friendly'?

Are signs clear and easy to read?

Is there step free access throughout the hall? How could we make it easier and safer for people with mobility issues to use the hall?

Is there a lot of echo in the hall? Might this cause a problem for some people?

What do our users and others in the community say about the hall? Are there any features that would improve their experience of using the hall?



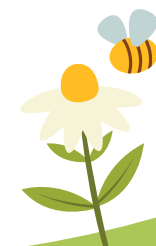
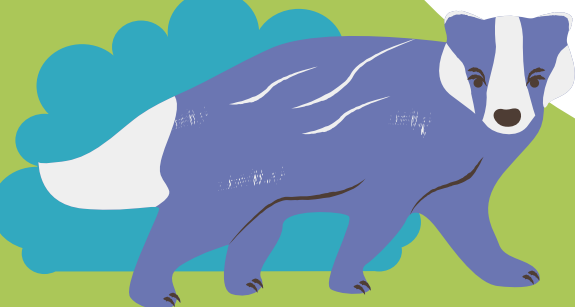
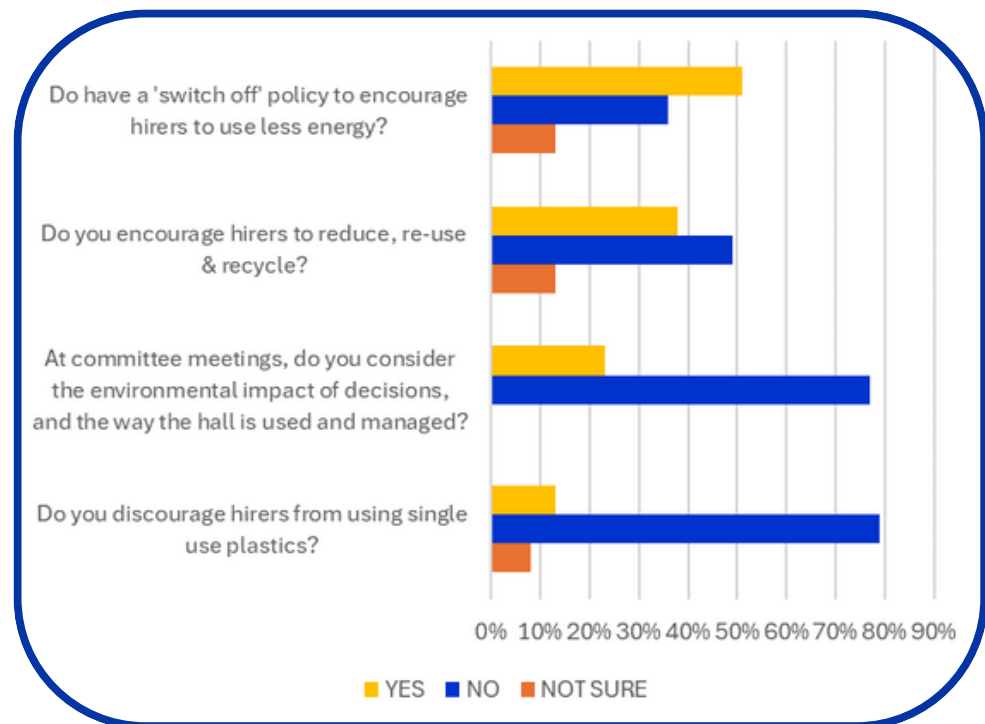
Looking after the natural environment - recycling, saving energy, clean energy and supporting biodiversity

Just 4 out of the 39 halls audited so far have an environmental policy, although many hall committees are interested in adopting more environmentally friendly approaches and are already reducing their environmental impact. An environmental policy can help committees clarify their approach to using energy efficiently, which saves money. It can also help to embed other environmentally friendly practices in to the way the hall is managed, such as:

- recycling
- reducing single use plastics
- using clean or cleaner energy where possible
- supporting biodiversity and caring for the natural environment

Even with a small outdoor space it is possible to make a positive impact by, for example:

- allowing some areas to grow completely wild
- planting native species
- installing a water butt to collect rainwater for dry periods
- using peat-free compost
- installing bird or bat boxes
- not using chemical pesticides
- leaving branch or log piles undisturbed
- planting or encouraging native wildflowers and grasses



Free Professional Energy Reviews for eligible CBAS members



We are delighted to be working in partnership with Wokingham Council Energy Team to offer free, professional Energy Reviews for eligible CBAS Member Halls. An energy review focuses on how energy is accessed and used in the hall. It is specific to the hall you manage and will offer detailed guidance, including costs, on the changes your committee can make to your hall and details of *cost savings* and *carbon reductions*.

To be eligible, your hall must meet the following criteria:

Be a CBAS member that has had a CCB Hall Audit

Have one or more of the following features identified in your audit:

- Poorly or uninsulated roof
- Poorly or uninsulated walls
- Single glazing and/or uninsulated doors
- Use of off grid oil or gas
- Old and or inefficient heating, lighting and hot water systems
- No/inefficient use of timers or thermostats, or poorly functioning/broken thermostatic systems.

Be able to demonstrate in a short statement an strong intention to take actions to reduce energy use and carbon emissions

This offer is open to Charities and Parish Council run halls.

You will be able to apply online using the short application form. For more information email kate.meads@ccberks.org.uk or view 21st Century Halls project page on our website www.ccberk.org.uk



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Community Buildings Advice Service Members accross Berkshire

