The English Village and Community Hall Survey 2020

Written on behalf of:

Action with Communities in Rural England

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Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

Foreword

The ten-year National Village Hall Surveys provide a snapshot of the state of England's varied and essential village and community halls, their funding, use and changes over time. Never has a snapshot been more of a historical record than in 2020: This survey records the state of village and community halls immediately before COVID-19 forced the first ever mass closure in their long history.

Halls usually provide a place of refuge in times of emergency such as snow, flood and fire, so closure was a new challenge for the precious army of volunteers who run them. In wartime communities came together in village and community halls for civil defence and entertainment, to make jam, clothing and even electronic components for Bletchley Park (Gordon Welchmann in Breaking the Enigma Codes). In the COVID-19 emergency, halls were only allowed to open to provide food and medicines, emergency services such as blood donation and pre-schools for children of emergency workers.

COVID-19 is possibly reflected in the slightly lower level of response to this survey, although the closing date was extended by a few weeks to allow for the sudden priority of making halls secure by 23rd March. Long-term impacts on finance and use of certain halls are anticipated but these will only gradually become clear in Autumn 2020: The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant and Discretionary Grants provided a cushion but re-opening has been slow and cautious because it had to take place in tandem with the sequential unlocking of different parts of the wider economy, in accordance with changing Government guidance, rather than the facilities and risk at each hall.

In order to capture the diversity of community buildings serving rural England and the benefits they deliver the survey form is inevitably lengthy so we are **extremely** grateful to the volunteers, staff and councillors who kindly gave their time to complete it. Their contribution is invaluable: Time and again the results of these surveys have provided the evidence needed to influence and shape public policy, to avoid legislative drafting inadvertently damaging the fragile financing of

these mainly charitable community buildings (e.g. avoiding VAT on building new halls), to address "red tape" (e.g. relaxation of licensing) and to win funding to help trustees modernise, adapt and rebuild facilities to meet current needs (e.g. lottery funding, the Village Halls Improvement Grant Fund in 2019). The survey has encompassed village halls, community centres, sports pavilions, church halls, churches and other facilities that provide multi-purpose meeting facilities for their community. The rural communities benefiting from those facilities serve mainly communities of 10,000. We hope the data provided will help ACRE and the ACRE Network to continue resourcing and adapting our advisory services and information to the challenges facing halls and communities – as we did in this tumultuous year.

Louise Beaton

ACRE Trustee and Consultant Community Halls Adviser

July 2020

Acknowledgements

Action with Communities in Rural England

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is the national voice for the 38 ACRE Network members who make up the country's largest rural network. Together, we reach 52,000 grassroots organisations in 11,000 rural communities.

Our mission is to provide an evidence-base and solutions to achieve a fair deal for rural communities and especially those residents most disadvantaged by rurality.

Our aim, to be the voice of rural communities – is supported by the wealth of evidence and intelligence on rural matters that we collect from our members.

We have a strong track record of speaking up for rural communities on the national stage and delivering projects that enable communities to find innovative solutions to the challenges they face.

Our members, many of which date back over 90 years, have a long and fruitful history of making a difference at a grassroots level. ACRE was formed in 1987 to bring members together under one umbrella, harnessing the strength of their experience to support our national work. As well as supporting our members, ACRE works with a wide range of partners who have an interest in achieving a fair deal for rural communities.

Through its network of skilled advisers, ACRE supports the 80,000 volunteers who run halls and similar rural community buildings, such as church halls and community centres.

This Report, The English Village and Community Hall Survey, will assist ACRE in providing evidence to support its work with halls locally and nationally.

Acknowledgements

ACRE is grateful to Power to Change for sponsoring the 2020 Survey, and to Tom Archer, Stephen Parkes and Beth Speake at Sheffield Hallam University for the data analysis and production of this report.

ACRE would also like to thank Louise Beaton, ACRE Trustee, and author of the 1988, 1998 and 2008 National Surveys for her assistance with this, the 2020, Survey.

The Survey would not have taken place without the support of the ACRE Network, Allied Westminster Insurance Services and the NRTF who promoted and circulated it across rural England.

Many thanks also for the dedicated work of the ACRE team, Deborah Clarke, Paul Dixon and Felicity Humphrey in developing, testing, co-ordinating and promoting the survey.

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NRTF National Rural Touring Forum

Allied Westminster

Report Highlights

This represents

21% OF ALL KNOWN HALLS IN ENGLAND

2,109

Halls responded to the survey

60%

said village halls are the **only meeting place** for their community.

Access to WiFi and broadband has dramatically increased in the last ten years.

70%

of respondents had **undertaken improvement works** in their hall in the last five years estimated to be in the region of:

£46m-£96m

Halls are of **historic and architectural** value:

7% are listed

35% of halls are in a **conservation area**

At least

10,000

individuals are **utilising halls to earn their living** demonstrating the importance and value of rural halls.

91%

of halls are not registered for VAT creating large sums of irrecoverable VAT **a burden for hall committees.**

16% don't have a car park

Car parking is critical to **ensuring access** and maximising value especially for residents that don't live nearby.

60%

of halls are making progress in adopting energy saving measures.

Halls are adopting modern and low carbon heating technologies but there is **scope for more investment** in renewable energy.

Village Hall

Executive Summary

Introduction and aims

This report is an independent analysis of the Village and Community Halls survey, which was run with halls across England during the early part of 2020. The analysis has been conducted by the Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR), at Sheffield Hallam University, on behalf of Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). For 30 years, ACRE has conducted surveys with village and community halls at ten-year intervals, the last being in 2009. These surveys provide ACRE and its members with up to date information about the operations, finances and management of halls, along with their social and economic impact. This helps ACRE advocate and influence a range of stakeholder on behalf of halls, as well as inform the support required.

Methods and sampling

The Survey was designed and deployed by ACRE via online software, helped greatly by ACRE Network members who encouraged halls to complete it. Online surveying represents a departure from the previous years when postal surveys were used. This has important implications for the sample and our interpretation of the results. It is also significant that a large proportion of responses were received before the lockdown measures relating to the coronavirus pandemic were introduced. Certain respondents may have been more aware of the potential impact that this would have.

The Survey obtained 2,109 unique responses from individual village and community halls. This represents approximately 21 per cent of all known halls in England. Based on an estimated population of 10,000 village and community halls nationally, the calculated margin of error for a typical variable is ±0.8 per cent at the 95 per cent level. In practice, this means we can have a high degree of confidence that if the survey was replicated, results would not differ by very much. Through the report we make comparisons with responses in the 2009 survey and earlier surveys, except where differences in survey questions make this inappropriate.

Meeting the needs of the community is a key issue....Common difficulties include lack of storage and parking space, lack of internet access and limited meeting space.

Halls and their communities

Halls are rooted in their communities, with half of those surveyed serving areas with a population of less than 1,000. In the 2020 survey, halls serving larger populations make up a greater proportion of respondents than in previous years. It is unclear whether this is a product of methodological changes, or whether other factors such as housing growth, the broader ‘reach’ of halls and other factors may have affected this.

Over 60 per cent of respondent halls stated that they were the only hall or similar meeting place in their village, a small increase from 2009. Wider evidence on the closure of churches, pubs and other public venues suggests a process of residualisation is taking place; village and community halls are, in many communities, the last community assets left standing.

Buildings

Over 50 per cent of those surveyed were 80 years old or more. The replacement and new development of halls is taking place at a relatively unchanged pace. The period 2010-2020 led to approximately the same amount of new halls being developed as the preceding decade, 2000-2009.

Over one third of halls reported that their roofs and/or gutters were either inadequate, in unsatisfactory condition and/or in need of urgent repair. Older halls (pre-1945) reported a higher number of problems in relation to different elements of the building.

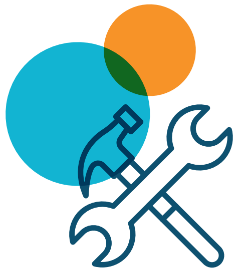
Just over a third of respondent halls suggested that their car park is inadequate for their needs and/or in bad condition - 16 per cent had no car park at all. This is likely to have important ramifications in terms who is able to access halls, and how much revenue can be derived. This is interrelated with the decline in bus services, particularly at weekends.

Major renovations are planned by a number of halls, with 16 per cent of those surveyed due to undertake work costing more than £100,000. The potential value of planned work is between £81m - £154m. Using this information to estimate the cost of such work over the next five years for all halls in England this is likely to be between £384m and £730m. Such investment would deliver significant local economic benefits, particularly given that over 85 per cent plan to use local builders and suppliers for all or almost all of the work.

70 per cent of respondents in 2020 had undertaken improvement work, built extensions or rebuilt part or all of their hall in the last five years. 65 per cent of these halls reported increased use as a result of such work. The cost of this work is estimated to have been in the region of £46.6m and £97.6m, representing an important expenditure into local economies. The vast majority of halls (92 per cent) are not registered for VAT. It is estimated that the irrecoverable VAT from improvement work undertaken in the last five years could be in the region of £9.3m - £19.5m

Many halls were unable to meet such cost with their own funds (26 per cent), highlighting the important role of grant funding and donations. Despite a varied picture in terms of applications to grant funders, the most widespread grant making to halls has been through parish councils. Only 6 per cent of halls had accessed loan finance to undertake such work, down from 9 per cent in 2009. For over three quarters of halls the cost of this improvement work was less than £50,000. The Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund has set a minimum £50,000 threshold for applications. As only 22 per cent of halls carrying out work would have been eligible to apply, there is perhaps scope to lower the cost threshold for applications and assist more halls.

90 per cent of respondent halls reported that they had broadband and Wifi access, a dramatic increase from 2009 - only 9 per cent had broadband provision in this last survey. However, as this was an online survey, and some rural communities may have poor internet access, this may overstate the improvements.



Major renovations are planned by a number of halls, with 16 per cent of those surveyed due to undertake work costing more than £100,000. The potential value of planned work is between £81m - £154m.

Accessibility

Over three quarters of halls now identify as being 'fully accessible', an increase of 5 per cent since 2009. The proportion of respondents suggesting that their hall had 'access for wheelchair users throughout' was high (73 per cent), though this represents a slight decline from 2009 when the equivalent figure 77 per cent of halls.

Approximately 16 per cent of halls are planning to undertake major improvements in the next five years to improve their facilities for disabled people.

Environmental impact

Many halls have installed technologies which reduce their impact on the environment, and in so doing, demonstrated the potential of these technologies to their local communities. However, there are many halls who could do more given the right financial support. Just under half of respondent halls have procedures in place to minimise their environmental impact. This represents a significant increase of over 15 per cent from 2009. 246 halls have installed solar photovoltaic panels, up from just 22 in 2009. The majority of halls have taken the most cost-effective and cheaper measures to improve their environmental impact, such as monitoring energy use (65 per cent) and installing double glazing (65 per cent). 6 per cent more halls now having double glazing compared to 2009. Other measures include installing energy saving light bulbs (63 per cent) and installing more efficient heating controls (60 per cent), the latter having risen by 10 per cent since 2009.

A small but significant proportion of halls (8 per cent) suggest their heating systems may fail in the next five years. If this proportion were grossed up to the total village hall population of c.10,000, that would represent 800 halls whose heating system may break-down in the medium term. This suggests that any grants and support for building improvements should focus on heating system renewals, and maximising the opportunities presented by renewable energy technologies.

Many halls have installed technologies which reduce their impact on the environment and in so doing demonstrated benefits to the community.

Allied with these findings, the survey shows an increasing number of halls who have adopted modern heating technologies. The data suggests a 7 per cent reduction in the use of overhead heaters compared to 2009. A larger proportion of halls are using air source heat pumps (increasing from 0.5 per cent in 2009 to 6 per cent in 2020) and ground source heat pumps now installed in 2 per cent. These changes will result in significant reductions in carbon emissions.

A source of emissions relates to the mode of transport used to access halls. There is an observable change in the availability of weekend bus services which will affect user's access at these times. Overall, nearly half the respondent halls stated they had seen the frequency of public transport to their community decline over the last five years, a very significant change with implications for the use and beneficial impacts that halls can have.

Management and administration

The survey suggests 88 per cent of respondent halls are registered charities, a drop of 2 per cent from 2009. These differences may be explained by having a higher proportion of halls serving larger communities in 2020. Nearly 13 per cent of these charitable halls have adopted the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) structure. This represents an increase from 2009 and reflects the take up of this new corporate structure since its introduction in the Charities Act 2011.

Halls with policies for protecting children have increased by 16 per cent as well as those with policies for protecting vulnerable adults (up by 32 per cent). It remains the case however, that less than half of the halls surveyed have these policies in place.

The survey shows that halls mobilise thousands of volunteers, but dealing with legislation and regulation places a burden on them.

Despite mobilising thousands of volunteers each year, around half of the halls had regularly experienced difficulties in recruiting new committee members. Two in five had successfully developed new services and activities in response to local need, but for hundreds a lack of volunteers had hindered these developments. Dealing with legislation and regulation was felt to place a difficult burden on volunteers. For almost 200 halls recruiting and motivating volunteers was the most important issue on which they would want training and support.

Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of halls have at least one volunteer booking secretary, and nearly two out of five have volunteer caretakers or handypersons. Separate research in 2019 showed that volunteering within community owned assets, like village and community halls, generates considerable wellbeing benefit. Volunteers play an important function in maintaining the buildings, carrying out small repairs, maintenance and checks within 94 per cent of respondent halls.

Many halls are also employing staff. We estimate this to be over 931 (44 per cent) of respondent halls. We estimate these halls are employing at least 650 cleaners and 314 caretakers/handypersons in full and part time roles. If similar levels of employment exist across all halls in England, then they would be employing over 3000 cleaners and nearly 1500 caretakers/ handypersons, In addition at least 10,000 individuals earn a living within respondent halls, collectively an important contribution to local economies.

Finance

Volunteer input is essential to the continuing viability of halls. Nearly three out of five respondent halls reported that their running costs totalled less than £10,000 per annum over the last two years. When inflation is factored in, the proportion of halls running on these low-cost bases is roughly the same in 2020 as 2009. However, such limited income limits capacity for investment in building improvements.

There has been a general improvement in the financial health of respondent halls and in financial planning, but also greater polarisation; around 50 per cent of respondent halls reported a small or healthy surplus made by hire charges and rental income. This compares favourably with

2009 when 46 per cent made some form of surplus. By far the largest of these income sources is hire charges. Those responding received over £19m in such fees, equivalent to £12,000 per hall. This potentially equates to £120 million per annum when grossed up to all village and community halls in England. Together with other forms of income such as fundraising, donations and rents respondent halls generated over £29 million in income per annum.

Nearly three quarters of hall committees believe that their hall will remain financially viable over the next 5 years, marginally up on results from 2009. However, it should be noted that the survey was launched before the lockdowns related to COVID-19. The picture may now be different. On a practical note, greater assistance could come in the form rate relief from local councils. Those local authorities who insist on an annual review of rate relief can reduce their own bureaucracy, and the impact on halls and their staff/volunteers, by moving to 3 or 5 year reviews.

Respondents were asked to state the value of their buildings for insurance purposes. Nearly half were valued at less than £500,000. Using assumptions about values within the ranges given, we estimate that the total value of respondent halls (for insurance purposes) is between £1bn-1.5bn. However, recent research suggests that, on average, property values are 59 per cent higher than valuations based on rebuild costs. Applying such assumptions to village and community halls suggests the value of halls nationally could be in the region of £9bn-15bn.

By far the largest income source is hire charges, and the survey suggests halls are securing over £19m in such fees, equivalent to £12,00 per hall.

Use of halls

The traditional activities taking place in halls continue to be popular. Private parties remain common, and demand for this is increasing. Similarly, pre-school education is a prominent use, and this is also identified as a growth activity. This may relate to the extension of services where they already existed - perhaps owing to free childcare entitlement - rather than new provision in halls. Nearly three quarters of halls are used for coffee mornings and afternoon teas, and 25 per cent of those responding have seen increases in this activity, along with further increases in community cafés and luncheon clubs. These services are likely to be making an important contribution in efforts to address loneliness and isolation among certain groups.

The use of halls for children's dance classes and fitness classes is increasing, the latter viewed as a growing activity by 50 per cent of respondents, continuing the trend from 2009. Halls are increasingly being used as an emergency response facility. Whilst halls were, generally speaking, closed during COVID-19 lockdown, some were used as a base for testing and remained open to provide essential services, such as food or drug distribution or pre-school provision for children of essential workers.

More halls report a higher proportion of the local population using their facilities than in 2009. Meeting the needs of the local community and other users is a key issue, but a quarter of halls found it difficult to do this. Common difficulties include a lack of storage and parking space, a lack of internet access, lack of volunteer capacity and limited meeting space. Despite the challenges, over 80 per cent of respondents feel their hall is changing people's lives for the better.

Over 60 percent of halls reported that up to 25 per cent of their local residents used their hall regularly. Comparing the 2009 and 2020 data highlights an increase in the proportion of halls used by 26-50 per cent of the local population.

Evidence suggests that, while regular use by older people has increased, use by those who have a disability has decreased since 2009. Similar trends in use are apparent for BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) residents. 42 per cent of disabled/infirm users did so regularly in 2009, whilst in 2020 this has decreased to 38 per cent. For regular BAME users 10 per cent did so regularly, down from 20 per cent in 2009. This issue warrants further study to ensure that halls remain inclusive.

Working with others

Around 7 per cent of halls are used by statutory services and other bodies, for instance, to run health and wellbeing related activities such as health checks and appointments, blood donations and mental health sessions. Usage of halls by statutory and related bodies was, however, some 4 per cent lower than in 2009. Our analysis suggests that some halls have experienced a decline in use for doctor's surgeries and baby clinics, though this is based on only a small number of responses. Nearly one in ten halls are used as a venue for community businesses, who in turn support the halls through hiring out space and other financial contributions. Over 11 per cent of halls host cafés, with a further 7 per cent hosting a local post office, and 2 per cent hosting a shop. Halls provide important infrastructure for various community businesses to function.

There has been a marked increase in the proportion of halls stating that they would benefit from training and advice, compared to 2009. A slightly smaller proportion of halls had sought advice from local village hall advisers, when compared to 2009. However, satisfaction with support remains high, with as 84 per cent rating this as 'excellent' or 'good, with a decrease in those deeming the service 'inadequate' in 2020.

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Contents

1. Introduction

Village halls and community buildings are part of the fabric of rural life, being the locus for activities and services that would otherwise be difficult to access. However, the role these assets play - and the impact they have - is subject to limited attention. Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) has sought to address this for over 30 years, running national surveys every ten years to capture information from those managing these buildings about the various physical, financial, social and environmental issues associated with them. In early 2020, with funding from Power to Change, ACRE initiated a new survey of village and community halls. This report focuses on the findings from this large-scale study.

The last survey – conducted in 2009 - revealed some important findings relating to halls, notably that they are a large and valuable group of assets, through which thousands of volunteer hours are mobilised each year. Furthermore, past surveys reveal that the usage of halls has been increasing for some time. And yet, there were signs of financial fragility in 2009, as well as the need for investment to improve the condition of the buildings and facilities. The 2009 survey recognised a need for more formal approaches around planning for reserves and in terms of repairs and maintenance. The Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund has been an important recent initiative, funding up to 20 per cent of eligible costs, for improvement and refurbishments up to a maximum of £75,000.

Whilst important funding and legislative changes have taken place since 2009, more recent events have created great uncertainty for all halls. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant many small third sector organisations are at the centre of local responses to the crisis[1]. And yet for most halls, the enforced closure of public space is likely to have had a significant impact on their revenue and operations. The 2020 survey ran between February and April 2020, and therefore does not capture the perceptions of most halls in this new era of COVID-19. It does, nonetheless, give a picture of the state of halls prior to this. Therefore, as restrictions are eased many of the plans, challenges and opportunities faced by halls remain the same.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant many small third sector organisations are at the centre of local responses to the crisis. And yet for most halls, the enforced closure of public space is likely to have had a significant impact on their revenue and operations.

The 2020 survey was administered by ACRE, with the support of its members, and this report represents an independent analysis of responses by the Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research (CRESR), at Sheffield Hallam University. The report is structured as follows:

- In the remainder of this section we detail the methods used in developing, distributing, and conducting the survey, followed by details of post-survey processes and analysis, and the likely margin of error in the data.
- The subsequent chapters present findings from specific sections in the survey; halls and their communities, the physical aspects of the buildings, issues concerning accessibility, environmental impact, management and administration, finance, the use of halls and perceptions of the future.
- The report concludes with a number of statements on the key findings from the analysis and potential implications for a range of stakeholders.

[1] Public Health England (2020) The community response to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Project aims

ACRE and its members require up to date information about halls and the social and economic impact they deliver for their communities to advocate and support this sector. The 2020 survey aimed to capture key information to help ACRE identify emerging challenges facing halls and their stakeholders and press for appropriate support and funding for halls and network services.

In carrying out the survey every ten years ACRE aims to derive data about changes in society which would otherwise be hard to capture. ACRE regularly uses this evidence, both to support village halls and in its wider work influencing policy and pushing for legislative changes and financial support.

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Survey methods

The survey remained largely unchanged from previous editions, though some redesign was required. An important change from previous years was that this survey was conducted wholly online, using an online survey platform. The survey was promoted via the ACRE website, where a dedicated survey hyperlink enabled respondents to access the survey. Further promotional work took place via social media, and ACRE Network members contacted their village and community halls directly to encourage them to complete it.

The sample and margin of error

Once the data had been compiled and respondent personal data removed, we undertook several tasks to prepare the data for analysis. The data was imported into SPSS and we removed partial responses where no identifying data for the hall was provided. We also removed duplicate records, and variables were restructured for ease of analysis. The data was also geocoded to allow for geographical analysis in QGIS.

The survey contains a mixture of largely single and multiple response options. In certain instances, it was difficult to differentiate between non-selection of response options, and partial responses. Hence, reported figures for each question relate to only those cases providing a response. Where no year is included in the column heading of a data table (e.g. “2009 %”) the data presented refers to the current 2020 survey.

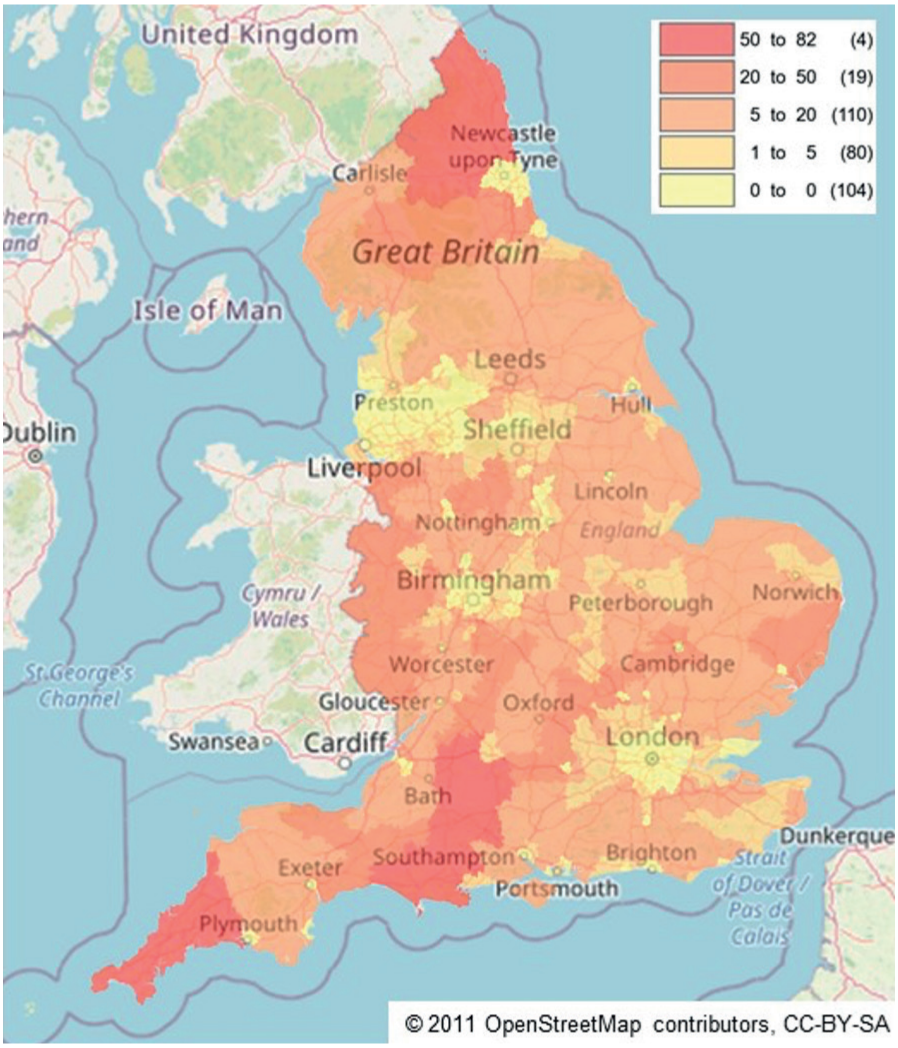
A total of 3,160 respondents were initially identified in the dataset, but after removing cases not proceeding beyond the first question, and duplicate cases, the final data contained 2,109 responses from individual halls. This represents approximately 21 per cent of all known village and community halls in England. Based on this sample of the 10,000 village and community halls nationally, the calculated margin of error for a typical variable with basic assumptions about distribution of data is ±0.8% at the 95% level. This means that 95% of the time we would expect that the true value lies within a range of 0.8 per cent either side of the reported value. Comparisons to previous surveys are used throughout the report to explore longitudinal change. However, differences in the sample in 2020 compared to 2009 mean we should be cautious in making certain inferences. The change in methodology to online surveying in 2020 may have a resulted in a sample with quite different characteristics. For instance, it seems likely the sample in 2020 has a higher proportion of larger halls, which may have more staff/volunteers with the requisite IT skills to complete the survey.

Data included from the 2009 survey has been drawn from the data tables held by ACRE and provided to the authors. These tables were calculated using the total number of responses to each question, thereby producing a variable base number of responses to each question. To ensure consistency with the analysis in these data tables this report follows the same approach.

Survey responses are presented geographically below, showing the approximate proportion of village halls responding from each administrative county.

The change in methodology to online surveying in 2020 may have a resulted in a sample with quite different characteristics.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents (number of respondent halls)



2. Village halls and their communities

Village and community halls are rooted in their places, serving local residents and those coming from further afield to access specific services. In the following section, we detail survey findings related to halls and aspects of their local place.

We present the findings in a mixture of graphical and tabular form, with segmental analysis and longitudinal insights provided where appropriate.

Size of population served by halls

A5. What is the approximate population of the area served by your hall? e.g. village, hamlet, parish or neighbourhood

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %	1998 %	1988 %
Up to 300	336	15.9	19.9	19.5	20.5
301-600	445	21.1	22.0	21.4	22.0
601-1,000	316	15.0	13.2	14.4	15.9
1,001-2,000	350	16.6	17.5	15.3	16.6
2,001-4,000	319	15.1	15.0	14.5	9.4
4,001-10,000	220	10.4	9.7	9.3	8.9
More than 10,001	123	5.8	2.7	1.8	8.9
Total	**2109**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**96.2**	**93.3**

Note: The percentage of halls in 1988 serving a local population of 4,001-10,000 and those serving more than 10,001, is only known in aggregate. Stated percentages for 1988 and 1998 do not equal 100.

The table above reveals that there is a fairly even distribution in terms of the population served by the respondent halls in the range up to 300 and up to 4,000 people, with a smaller number of halls serving 10,000 or more people. Over half of all the halls are serving areas with less than 1,000 people.

Halls may however be being used by individuals from outside this immediate area. Specific activities (e.g. leisure classes, fairs) may draw users from much wider distances, in part depending on the quality and availability of activities and services in surrounding areas.

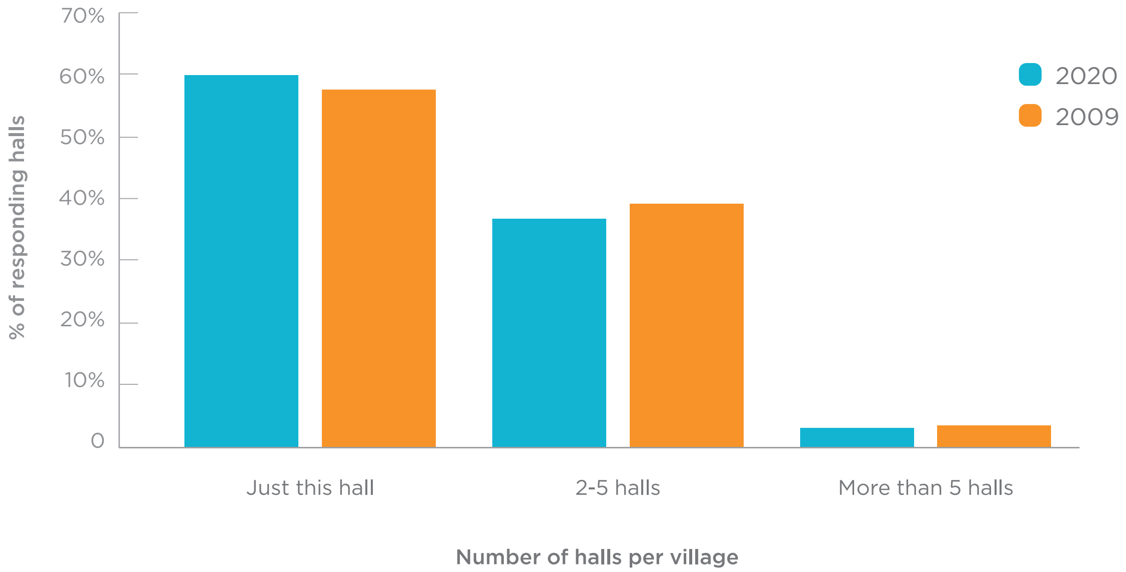
Comparisons with past questions beg a number of questions about the populations served by halls. In 2020 a much higher proportion of respondents served populations over 10,001 compared to previous years. The extent to which this reflects changes in the sample or, for instance, growing local populations, broader reach to adjacent communities etc, is unclear.

In 2020 a higher proportion of respondents served populations over 10,001 compared to previous years.

Other local halls and meeting places

A6. How many village or community halls or similar meeting places are in your village?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Just this hall	1268	60.1	57.5
2-5	776	36.8	39.2
More than 5	65	3.1	3.3
Total	**2109**	**100.0**	**100.0**



60 per cent of respondent halls reported that they were the only hall in the village, a small increase from 2009. Just under 37 per cent stated that there were between 2-5 halls in their village. Hence, nearly all halls responding are either the primary meeting place for their community, or one of a limited number. There appears to be an association between population served and the numbers of halls and other meeting places in the vicinity. For instance, 96 per cent of halls serving up to 300 people are the only hall in the area. However, for halls serving populations of 10,001-12,000 only 19 per cent are the only hall in the area.

Wider events highlight the significance of these findings, and the role of halls as local meeting places. Research by the Office for National Statistics[2] suggests that in 2001 there were over 52,000 public houses and bars in the UK. By 2019 this had dropped markedly to 39,000. This pattern is mirrored in other community spaces in which people meet, for instance, in the closure of churches and other religious buildings[3]. Halls may represent, in many communities, the last dedicated community meeting space, as other assets are lost to private ownership and use.

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[2] ONS (2020). Economies of ale: changes in the UK pubs and bars sector, 2001 to 2019.

[3] Braithwaite, G. (2020). Struggling, closed and closing churches research project.

Types of hall

A7. Which of the following best describes your hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %	1998 %
Village or community hall	1592	75.5	78.3	83
Community centre	157	7.4	7.0	8
Memorial hall	155	7.3	7.0	*
Church hall or room	62	2.9	2.5	3
Parish/town council hall	41	1.9	1.8	*
Other	32	1.5	1.8	2
Sports pavilion	24	1.1	0.2	*
Hall jointly used by community and school	14	0.7	0.9	0.7
Reading room	12	0.6	0.6	0.6
Scout or Guide hall	8	0.4	0.1	0.2
Women's Institute hall	7	0.3	0.6	0.8
Miner's Welfare Institute hall	5	0.2	0.2	0.1
Total	**2109**	**100.0**	**101.0**	-

Note: 2009 percentages higher than 100 due to rounding. Differing response options allow for only partial comparison with 1998 results.

Three quarters of the responding halls described their hall as a village or community hall, with memorial halls (7.3 per cent) and community centres (7.4 per cent) accounting for approximately another 15 per cent of the total.

Comparisons with 2009 suggest potential differences in respondent types over the two surveys. In 2020 respondents were more likely, for example, to classify their hall as a 'Memorial hall' or 'Community centre' than 'Village hall'. A significant proportion of respondents in 2020 identified as a sports pavilion compared to previous years. Reductions in the proportion of respondents identifying as a village or community hall - across the last three surveys - may suggest such changes are the result of something more than just sampling differences.

Three quarters of the responding halls described their hall as a village or community hall.

The types of halls and sizes of local populations

A5 & A7. Approximate population and hall type.

	Approximate population of the area served by the hall					
	0-1,000		1,001-4,000		More than 4,000	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Village or community hall	940	85.7	498	74.4	154	44.9
Memorial hall	77	7.0	51	7.6	27	7.9
Community centre	22	2.0	51	7.6	84	24.5
Church hall or room	16	1.5	22	3.3	24	7.0
Parish/town council hall	5	0.5	14	2.1	22	6.4
Hall jointly used by community and school	7	0.6	6	0.9	1	0.3
Reading room	9	0.8	1	0.1	2	0.6
Women’s Institute hall	2	0.2	2	0.3	3	0.9
Miner’s Welfare Institute hall	3	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.6
Sports pavilion	5	0.5	13	1.9	6	1.7
Scout or guide hall	1	0.1	3	0.4	4	1.2
Other	10	0.9	8	1.2	14	4.1
Total	**1097**	**100.0**	**669**	**100.0**	**343**	**100.0**

The proportion of halls described as a ‘village or community hall’ was highest amongst locations with small populations. 85.7 per cent of halls in populations of less than 1,000 were described as such. In contrast, where populations were over 4,000, community centres were much more likely to exist, reflecting different terminologies and perhaps perceptions of halls in different sized populations.

Other local facilities

A8. What are the other main community facilities in your village/town?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Church or chapel	1828	86.7
Pub	1430	67.8
School	1149	54.5
Shop/Post Office	1000	47.4
Sports pavilion (eg bowls, cricket, football)	803	38.1
Pre-school	643	30.5
School hall	618	29.3
Church hall	543	25.7
Village or community hall	530	25.1
Scout hall	374	17.7
Other (please specify)	247	11.7
Community centre	190	9.0
Parish/town council hall	138	6.5
British Legion Hall	91	4.3
Memorial hall	89	4.2
Reading room	47	2.2
Women's Institute hall	30	1.4
Miner's Welfare Institute hall	11	0.5
Total	**2109**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Church or chapel was the most frequently selected answer for the other main community facility in the village or town by the responding halls, at nearly 90 per cent, suggesting these institutions continue to play an important part in village life. Pubs were second most frequently chosen as one of the other main community facilities at nearly 70 per cent. Educational institutions and buildings, including schools, pre-schools, and school halls, were also frequently designated as other main community facilities in the village.

Comparisons with the 2009 survey are somewhat difficult as a different set of categories were used to identify community facilities in 2009, and the question focused specifically on meeting spaces in this former

Church or chapel was the most frequently selected answer for the other main community facility in the village or town by responding halls.

survey. Some limited comparison is possible though. Despite evidence of church closures nationally, respondents in 2020 were more likely to identify a church as a local community facility than in 2009. Conversely school halls, a community facility widely identified in 2009, were cited by fewer respondents in 2020, which may indicate growing limitations on availability.

Online presence

A9. Does your hall have the following?

	2020 Count	2020 %
A website or page on a community website	1687	91.3
Facebook page	1015	55.0
Twitter account	141	7.6
Instagram account	67	3.6
Total	**1847**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Turning to the issue of communication and promotion of services and facilities, the vast majority of responding halls reported that they have a website or a dedicated page on a community website. Over half (55 per cent) now have a presence on Facebook. A small minority have a Twitter or Instagram account. Given that the 2020 survey was conducted with online survey software, we would expect a high proportion to be using online media to communicate. Hence, the result above may not be reflective of all halls in England. Assessing changes over time in the adoption of online methods is difficult, as previous surveys did not assess this. Future surveys may explore which mediums become the preferred choice for village and community halls, and how quickly new forms of online communication are adopted.

The vast majority of responding halls reported that they have a website or a dedicated page on a community website.

Other services and organisations hosted

A13. Which of the following use a space in the building on a permanent or semi-permanent basis?

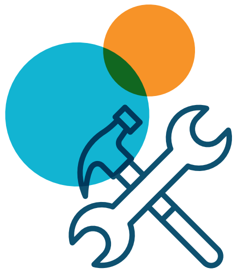
	2020 Count	2020 %
Parish Council	891	63.3
Other enterprise	427	30.3
Pre-school Playgroup (charitable)	423	30.0
Social Club	342	24.3
Café	159	11.3
Nursery (business)	158	11.2
Post Office	100	7.1
Shop	27	1.9
Total	**1408**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Detailed analysis on the use of halls is presented in Section 8, but respondents provided some insights into the service and facilities hosted on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. Of those responding to this question, 891 halls reported that a Parish Council used their space. In a sign of the important role that halls play in hosting childcare and other services (potentially targeting older residents) a significant proportion are used by playgroups (30 per cent) and social clubs (24 per cent). Unfortunately, no comparable data was available from 2009.

891 halls reported that a Parish Council used their space.

3. Buildings



The physical structure and quality of halls is closely linked to their capacity to provide appropriate and desirable facilities, which in turn is connected to their ability to secure income. Halls are susceptible to many of the challenges faced by other community owned assets. Recent research suggests that for many, repairs and maintenance is a key issue[4]. That research found a lack of long-term planning for major renewals and renovations, and concerns about the physical quality of the facilities on offer.

The following section looks at these issues, outlining some of the physical aspects of halls, and areas where repairs and maintenance are required.

Halls are susceptible to many of the challenges faced by other community owned assets.

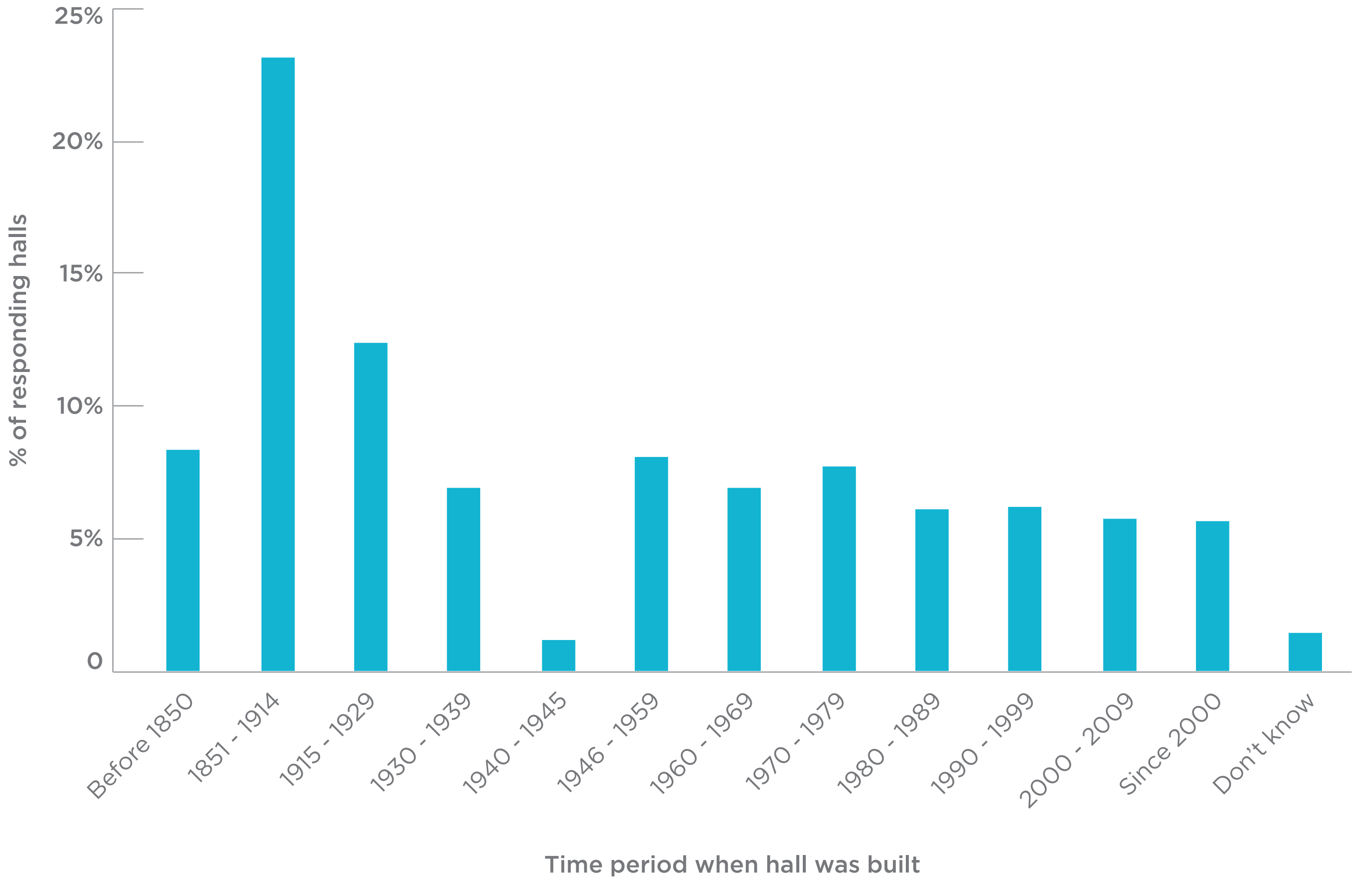
The age of halls

A10. When was your hall built? (ignoring later extensions)

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %	1998 %
Before 1850	175	8.4	7	7
1851-1914	484	23.1	26	24
1915-1929	260	12.4	14	15
1930-1939	144	6.9	8	7
1940-1945	25	1.2	1	1
1946-1959	169	8.1	10	10
1960-1969	144	6.9	7	7
1970-1979	162	7.7	8	10
1980-1989	127	6.1	7	8
1990-1999	130	6.2	7	7
2000 – 2009	121	5.8	5	*
Since 2010	120	5.7	*	*
Don't know	32	1.5	*	*
Total	**2093**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**96.0**

Over 50 per cent of respondent halls are over 80 years old, and this has an important bearing on the physical quality and structure of the buildings (see Section 3). Only around one in ten halls had been built since the year 2000. However, halls of this age do constitute an important minority of the sample in 2020, compared to previous surveys.

[4] CRESR (2019). Our Assets, Our Future. Available at http://shura.shu.ac.uk/25115/.



World War I (WWI) Memorials

A11a. Is the hall (or does it contain) a WWI memorial?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	242	12.1
No	1743	86.9
Don't Know	20	1.0
Total	**2005**	**100.0**

A significant number of halls (242) are, or contain, a WWI memorial, 12% of the sample.

A significant number of halls (242) are, or contain, a WWI memorial. This constitutes 12 per cent of the sample. Given that only 155 respondents identified as 'Memorial Halls', this suggests that significant more actually contain memorials. No comparable data was available for 2009 to track any changes in WWI memorials but we would assume significant change is unlikely.

Listing and conservation areas

A11b. Is the hall listed?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2019 %
Yes	144	7.2	6.6
No	1821	90.7	90.3
Don't Know	43	2.1	3.1
Total	**2008**	**100.0**	**100.0**

A11c. Is the hall in a conservation area?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2019 %
Yes	717	35.1	36.7
No	1202	58.8	54.7
Don't Know	124	6.1	8.6
Total	**2043**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Approximately 7 per cent of halls were classed as listed buildings by respondents. This was a slightly higher proportion than in 2009, but within the margin of error. Around a third of halls in the sample (35 per cent) are located within a conservation area. Significantly, respondents were more likely in 2020 to state that their hall was not in a conservation area compared to 2009 (+4 per cent). It is unclear whether this represents halls rebuilt outside conservation areas or the nature of the sample, or both. With a significant proportion of halls in conservation areas, this likely limits their scope for physical development on site and/or external improvements. This may have a bearing on efforts to improve accessibility, environmental impact, and other aspects of the building.

Architectural features

A12. If your hall has any special architectural features, please state what they are here? (tick all that apply)

	2020 Count	2020 %
Open ceilings with exposed beams	354	52.8
Other	160	23.8
Arched windows	159	23.7
Fireplace	116	17.3
Leaded windows	98	14.6
Bell Tower	78	11.6
Balcony	62	9.2
Murals or wall paintings	42	6.3
Total	**671**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

671 halls listed special architectural features, with the most common feature described being open ceilings with exposed beams (354 halls). Arched windows (159), leaded windows (98) and bell towers (78) were also reported by many halls, in line with the common features to be found in churches, chapels and old schools. Even if all non-respondents to this question did not have special architectural features in their halls, the proportion that do would stand at 31 per cent. Allied with the finding that over 10 per cent of halls are listed buildings, we would suggest that a large minority of the halls responding are of historic and/or architectural value.

The fabric of the building

B14. What is the main construction of the walls?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %	1998 %
Brick and/or Stone	1633	78.6	81.6	78.6
Wood	156	7.5	8.1	13.0
Cement block	144	6.9	6.1	10.3
Pre-cast concrete panels	47	2.3	2.3	3.9
Don’t Know	29	1.4	*	*
Corrugated iron	20	1.0	1.9	3.0
Other	49	2.4	*	4.5
Total	**2078**	**100.0**		

Over three quarters of halls’ responding to the survey were constructed from brick and/or stone. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the age of many buildings, little variance was seen from the results in 2009. One exception was the amount of brick and/or stone buildings. In 2009 this was found to be 82 per cent of respondents which, at 3 per cent higher than the 2020 result. Over time, assuming the samples do not skew the picture, we can see a decline in wood, cement block and corrugated iron structures.

Note: Different response options in previous survey make only partial comparison possible.

Configuration of halls

B15. Which of the following rooms/areas do you have in your hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Main Hall	2056	98.8
Kitchen/Kitchen facilities	2039	97.9
Lobby/Entrance Hall	1855	89.1
Storage space	1675	80.5
Committee Room/Small rooms	1473	70.7
Permanent stage	867	41.6
Backstage/Dressing rooms	385	18.5
Sports Changing rooms/Showers	255	12.2
Total	**2082**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Configuration of halls

B15 & F69. Rooms/areas in your hall by approximate total annual income.

	Approximate annual income							
	£0 - £10,000		£10,001 - £20,000		£20,001-£30,000		£30,000+	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Lobby/Entrance Hall	989	85.0	432	94.1	210	92.5	224	96.1
Main Hall	1142	98.2	458	99.8	226	99.6	230	98.7
Committee Room/Small rooms	673	57.9	376	81.9	205	90.3	219	94.0
Permanent stage	393	33.8	211	46.0	125	55.1	138	59.2
Backstage/Dressing rooms	167	14.4	80	17.4	55	24.2	83	35.6
Kitchen/Kitchen facilities	1132	97.3	454	98.9	225	99.1	228	97.9
Sports Changing rooms/Showers	104	8.9	58	12.6	38	16.7	55	23.6
Storage space	885	76.1	380	82.8	201	88.5	209	89.7
Total	**1163**		**459**		**227**		**233**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Nearly all respondents (98 per cent) have a main hall, and similar proportions have some form of kitchen or catering facilities. Nearly three quarters (71 per cent) also have dedicated meeting space in the form of committee/small rooms. Mirroring findings in 2009, two in five have a permanent stage, suggesting a large proportion of halls have capacity for a range of arts and cultural offerings (see Section 8).

Halls that reported higher approximate annual incomes were more likely to have additional facilities such as a permanent stage, dressing rooms, and sports changing rooms.

The size of halls

B16. What is the approximate size of the main hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Up to 100m2	545	27.8	29.9
101-200m2	921	46.9	41.3
201-300m2	282	14.4	14.2
301-400m2	143	7.3	6.1
More than 400m2	72	3.7	3.6
Total	**1963**	**100.0**	**96.1**

Note: Response options in 2009 included an 'Unsure' option so column does not total 100.

B17. What is the seating capacity of each principle meeting room (theatre style)?

Main hall capacity

	2020 Count	2020 %
Up to 50	142	6.9
51-100	945	46.1
101-150	614	30.0
151-200	261	12.7
201 or more	86	4.2
Total	**2048**	**100.0**

Second hall capacity

	2020 Count	2020 %
Up to 50	849	70.0
51-100	171	14.1
101-150	16	1.3
151-200	4	0.3
201 or more	3	0.2
We don't have a second hall	170	14.0
Total	**2048**	**100.0**

The size of halls

B16 & F69. Approximate size of main hall by approximate total annual income.

	Approximate annual income							
	£0 - £10,000		£10,001 - £20,000		£20,001-£30,000		£30,000+	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Up to 100m2	396	36.8	103	23.4	21	9.7	25	10.9
101-200m2	454	42.2	228	51.7	128	59.3	111	48.3
201-300m2	132	12.3	69	15.6	35	16.2	46	20.0
301-400m2	68	6.3	25	5.7	19	8.8	31	13.5
More than 400m2	26	2.4	16	3.6	13	6.0	17	7.4
Total	**1076**	**100.0**	**441**	**100.0**	**216**	**100.0**	**230**	**100.0**

Three quarters of respondents had a main hall smaller than 200m2. In this 2020 survey, a higher proportion of respondents had larger main halls, of over 301m2. 11 per cent of respondents' halls fell into this category, compared to 9.7 per cent in 2009. This is as we might expect, given other findings about the size of populations served by respondents in 2020. Around half of all halls can accommodate up to 100 people in their main hall (in a theatre style). A significant proportion (11 per cent) have large main halls of over 300m2 in size. 17 per cent accommodate more than 150 people. Comparisons with 2009 responses on the capacity of main and secondary halls is difficult as response options in the surveys differed.

Comparing the approximate size of the main hall with reported annual income reveals that for those with an annual income below £30,000 there is not a notable difference in hall size. Over two-thirds of halls in each of these three income groups had a main hall size less than 200m2. However, for those with an income over £30,000, there was a much greater likelihood of the main hall being over 200m2 (40.9 per cent of halls from this income group). This compares to only 21.0 per cent of halls from the £0-10,000 income group with hall size over 200m2. These findings related to hall size perhaps reflect factors such as the size of the local population and/or specific user requirements, particularly where provision is made for indoor sports.

A significant proportion (11 per cent) have large main halls of over 300m2 in size, with 17 percent being able to accommodate more than 150 people.

Performance facilities and equipment

B18. Is your hall fully equipped for performance?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Staging	1114	75.7
Audio/Sound system	1060	72.0
Film/projection equipment	728	49.5
Total	**1472**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

B19. Does your hall have a car park in good condition that is adequate for your needs?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	1348	65.2
No	719	34.8
Total	**2067**	**100.0**

B21. Does your hall have any of the following?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Broadband and WiFi	1080	90.1
CCTV	429	35.8
Electronic entry system	162	13.5
Public Telephone	129	10.8
Total	**1472**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

90 per cent of respondent halls reported that they had broadband and WiFi access, a dramatic increase from 2009.

Nearly three quarters of respondent halls have a sound system, but just under half have film or projection equipment.

Slightly over one third of respondent halls do not have a car park or one that is inadequate for their needs and/or in bad condition. Adequate car parking space in close proximity to the hall is important for many users of these community facilities, for example elderly people and those with mobility issues. Lack of access to a car park excludes halls from hosting certain events, particularly those serving disabled people and those where people come from a wider area, such as wedding receptions and "footloose" activities (i.e. special interest groups not serving one geographic community, antique fairs etc.), potentially leading to reduced earning potential from hire charges. This has important connections with the issue of public transport provision and declines in certain services (see Section 4).

90 per cent of respondent halls reported that they had broadband and WiFi access, a dramatic increase from 2009 when only 9 per cent of respondent halls had broadband and a further 4 per cent had dial-up internet. This is a marked change and whilst some of this may be accounted for by methodological changes and differences in sample, it seems unlikely this is the only factor to explain the differences. It is likely that many halls now have greater connectivity, and that this has changed their administrative processes and forms of communication.

Components in need of repair

B20. Maintenance of your hall is important. Please tell us of items that are inadequate, in unsatisfactory condition and/or needing urgent repair.

	2020 Count	2020 %
Roof/gutters	455	36.3
Storage space	400	31.9
Heating system	390	31.2
Toilets	366	29.2
Décor	338	27.0
Doors/windows	338	27.0
Kitchen	319	25.5
Floor	262	20.9
Lighting	249	19.9
External Walls	232	18.5
Other	168	13.4
Meeting space(s) Main hall	134	10.7
Total	**1252**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

B20. Maintenance of your hall is important. Please tell us of items that are inadequate, in unsatisfactory condition and/or needing urgent repair.

	Pre-1945		Post-1945		Total Count
	Count	%	Count	%	
Meeting space(s) Main hall	42	60.9	27	39.1	**69**
Kitchen	77	59.7	52	40.3	**129**
Toilets	78	53.4	68	46.6	**146**
Lighting	56	60.9	36	39.1	**92**
Storage space	86	52.1	79	47.9	**165**
Heating system	79	59.8	53	40.2	**132**
Décor	60	53.6	52	46.4	**112**
Floor	56	64.4	31	35.6	**87**
Roof/gutters	77	56.2	60	43.8	**137**
External Walls	61	69.3	27	30.7	**88**
Doors/windows	73	59.3	50	40.7	**123**
Other	32	62.7	19	37.3	**51**

Components in need of repair

B20 & F69. Items that are inadequate, in unsatisfactory condition and/or needing urgent repair by approximate total annual income.

	Approximate annual income							
	£0 - £10,000		£10,001 - £20,000		£20,001-£30,000		£30,000+	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Meeting space(s) Main hall	81	11.4	24	9.0	10	7.4	19	13.6
Kitchen	198	27.9	53	19.9	38	28.1	30	21.4
Toilets	224	31.5	65	24.3	36	26.7	41	29.3
Lighting	158	22.3	43	16.1	24	17.8	24	17.1
Storage space	221	31.1	93	34.8	38	28.1	48	34.3
Heating system	247	34.8	79	29.6	33	24.4	31	22.1
Décor	207	29.2	70	26.2	28	20.7	33	23.6
Floor	145	20.4	58	21.7	27	20.0	32	22.9
Roof/gutters	266	37.5	83	31.1	48	35.6	58	41.4
External Walls	147	20.7	47	17.6	23	17.0	15	10.7
Doors/windows	199	28.0	64	24.0	37	27.4	38	27.1
Other	89	12.5	46	17.2	16	11.9	17	12.1
Total	**710**		**267**		**135**		**140**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Over a third of responding halls reported that their roofs and/or gutters were either inadequate, in unsatisfactory condition and/or in need of urgent repair. Roofing repairs are an expensive undertaking with the costs of such work presenting a barrier to having this work done. Other commonly reported issues included problems with the condition or repair of kitchens, toilets, doors/windows, heating systems and storage space, all cited by around 30 per cent of responding halls. Modernisation or improvement of many of these elements requires significant capital investment.

Cross-tabulating responses with the age of the hall is revealing. This shows that older halls (pre-1945) reported a higher number of problems in terms of satisfaction with, and condition of, different elements of the building. Flooring and external wall problems stand out as being of particular issue for the pre-1945 halls.

Halls with smaller annual incomes were, overall, reporting more problems. However, halls with higher incomes (over £30,000) were slightly more likely to have issues with flooring and the roof/gutters. This may be linked to the fact that halls with the highest incomes tend to have larger halls and thus greater maintenance costs.

Modernisation or improvement of many of these elements requires significant capital investment.

4. Accessibility

Improving accessibility is a critical issue for halls, not only to ensure services can be accessed, but also to maximise the impacts halls can have on specific groups within local communities. For instance, many halls provide and host services and facilities for older people and are therefore central to efforts to tackle loneliness, isolation and general health and wellbeing issues prevalent among this group. Previous ACRE reports have stressed the need to 'ensure community halls are warm, comfortable and safely used by people as they become frailer', and that 'building constraints should not present a reason for failure to provide for a wider range of infirmities'[5].

The following section looks at these issues, outlining some of the processes halls are engaged in to offer high levels of accessibility, and the facilities and support offered to ensure this.

Access audits

C22. Has an access audit been carried out on your hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	991	48.2	43.5
No	527	25.6	33.1
Don't know	539	26.2	23.4
Total	**2057**	**100.0**	**100.0**

A little under 50 per cent of respondent halls have had an access audit carried out. A further 25 per cent did not know whether or not one had been undertaken. Approximately 5 per cent more halls in 2020 had conducted an access audit, compared to 2009, some possibly carried out as part of planning refurbishment or rebuilding works.

Status of accessibility

C23. Regarding accessibility of your hall, please tick the statement that best describes your current situation.

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Our hall is fully accessible	1587	77.7	72.5*
It is not feasible to make our hall fully accessible (e.g. listed building, lack space)	204	10.0	8.8
We have plans to make our hall fully accessible and funds are being raised	181	8.9	*
It is not a priority to make our hall fully accessible	71	3.5	2.2
Total	**2057**	**100.0**	**-**

Note: Differences in questions mean it is not possible to compare some response options. In 2009 a dedicated question was asked about full or partial accessibility. Responses in 2009 stating halls were 'fully accessible' have been used as a basis to compare with the 2020 response option 'Our hall is fully accessible'.

[5] ACRE (2009). The State and Management of Rural Community Buildings

Status of accessibility

Survey responses suggest that although 78 per cent of halls are now fully accessible, this is an increase of only 5 per cent since 2009. Such a change may be explained by sampling differences. Our confidence in the 2020 result can be seen in the high response rate compared to 2009, which only asked specific questions of those not achieving full accessibility. Nearly 9 per cent indicated that they were planning to make their premises accessible and were raising funds for this. A further 10 per cent stated that it was not feasible to make their hall fully accessible. This represents an increase on 2009, suggesting a greater proportion of halls are reconciled to being unable to improve accessibility e.g. owing to site constraints and listed building status.

Access for wheelchair users

C24. Does your hall provide...?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Access for wheelchair users throughout hall	1512	73.4	76.8
Limited access for wheelchair users	510	24.8	23.6
No access for wheelchair users	37	1.8	*
Total	**2059**	**100.0**	**-**

Note: Differences in structure of questions in 2009 make only certain comparisons possible.

Nearly three quarters of halls (73 per cent) provide accessibility for wheelchair users throughout their buildings. However, approximately 25 per cent of respondent halls have either limited or no access for such users. This is an important finding and suggests that much could still be done to improve accessibility for some. Improving accessibility may have major financial implications if, for instance, halls look to widen doorways, install lifts and so on. Comparisons with 2009 may not reveal true changes in accessibility over time, given sampling differences.

Nearly three quarters of halls (73 per cent) provide accessibility for wheelchair users throughout their buildings.

Accessibility features

C25. Which of the following does your hall provide?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Toilets with handrails	1681	88.1
Baby changing facilities	1285	67.3
Disabled or parent and child parking	916	48.0
Hearing loop (fixed or portable)	775	40.6
Portable ramp	233	12.2
Lift or stairlift	119	6.2
Measures to assist the partially sighted (e.g. Braille signage, colour contrasts)	86	4.5
Total	**1909**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

C26. How many spaces are designated for disabled and/or parent and child parking?

	2020 Count	2020 %
None	720	35.1
One	332	16.2
2-5	645	31.5
More than 5	31	1.5
We don't have a car park	321	15.7
Total	**2049**	**100.0**

A significant proportion of halls provide toilets with handrails (88.1 per cent) and baby changing facilities (67.3 percent). Two fifths of the halls responding provide a hearing loop service, and nearly half provide either disabled or parent and child parking. On this issue of parking specific questioning suggests that over one third of respondent halls do not have any parking spaces designated for disabled or parent and child parking. It is important to note that a further 16.2 per cent do not have a car park at all.

As public transport options may be diminishing for some hall users, the issue of car parking is critical to ensuring access and maximising the value of halls to residents who are not in close proximity to them. Direct comparisons with 2009 are difficult on this issue as the 2020 survey included parent and child parking spaces in the questions, whereas the 2009 survey did not. In 2009, 47 per cent of respondent halls had at least one disabled parking space (including non-respondents in the calculations). In 2020 nearly 49 per cent of halls had some form of disabled or parent and child parking, a small increase that undoubtedly affects who can and does access halls.

In 2020 nearly 49 per cent of halls had some form of disabled or parent and child parking.

5. Environmental impact

Since the first Village Halls survey in 1988, the issue of environmental sustainability has become a more prominent feature of public debate and policy making, affecting a range of changes in funding, regulation, and operational requirements for halls. Many Village and Community Halls have installed innovative technologies which reduce their impact on the environment, and in doing so demonstrated their benefits to the local community. However, for many halls the structure and form of their building limits what can be achieved without major capital investment.

The following section identifies what halls have done to address their environmental sustainability, what hinders further action, and what plans they have for future improvements.

Policies, procedures and practices

D27. Does your hall...?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Encourage participation in community led environmental initiatives	640	55.4	74.8*
Have procedures in place to minimise its environmental impact	556	48.1	32.5
Have an environmental policy	419	36.3	14.7
Involve users in devising action plans to improve the impact of the hall on the environment	292	25.3	20.1
Total	**1155**		

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question. In 2009 the fourth response option was slightly different and did not include word 'environmental'. The 2009 wording was 'Encourage participation in community-led initiatives'.

There has been a rise in the proportion of halls with procedures in place to minimise their environmental impact since 2009, up 15 per cent to almost 50% in 2020. However, there are still clearly many halls which could do more. Significantly more respondent halls had an environmental policy in place in 2020, 36 per cent compared to 15 per cent in 2009. And it also appears more halls are involving users in developing action plans to address the environmental impact of their hall. Differences between 2009 and 2020 on the issue of 'encouraging participation in community-led environmental initiatives' are likely to stem from the more generic phrasing of this response option in 2009.

...for many halls the structure and form of their building limits what can be achieved without major capital investment.

Source of heating

D28. What is the main source of heating used in the hall?

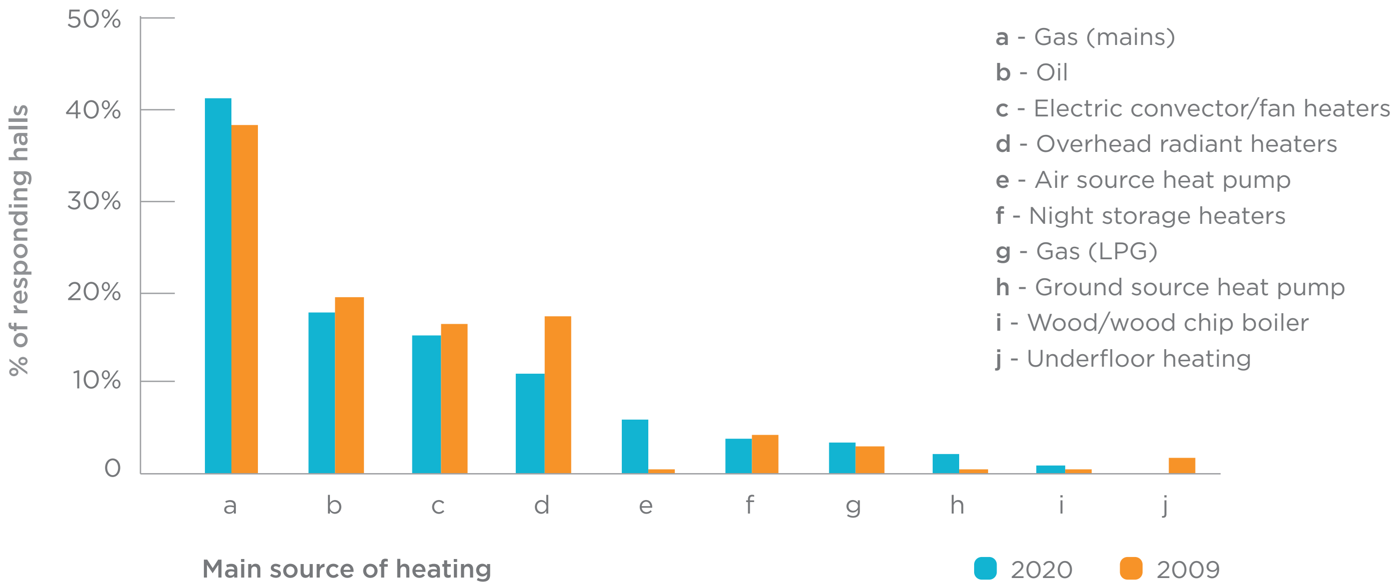
	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Gas (mains)	834	40.9	38.2
Oil	358	17.6	19.1
Electric convector/fan heaters	310	15.2	16.4
Overhead radiant heaters	222	10.9	17.2
Air source heat pump	120	5.9	0.5
Night storage heaters	73	3.6	4.0
Gas (LPG)	66	3.2	2.7
Ground source heat pump	44	2.2	0.4
Wood/wood chip boiler	12	0.6	0.1
Total	**2039**	**100.0**	

Note: Underfloor heating was an option provided in the 2009 survey, but not in 2020.

D29. Have any other sources of renewable energy (not mentioned above) been installed in previous years?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Solar photovoltaic panels	246	83.7
Solar thermal panels	53	18.0
Wind turbine	4	1.4
Micro hydro	3	1.0
Total	**294**	

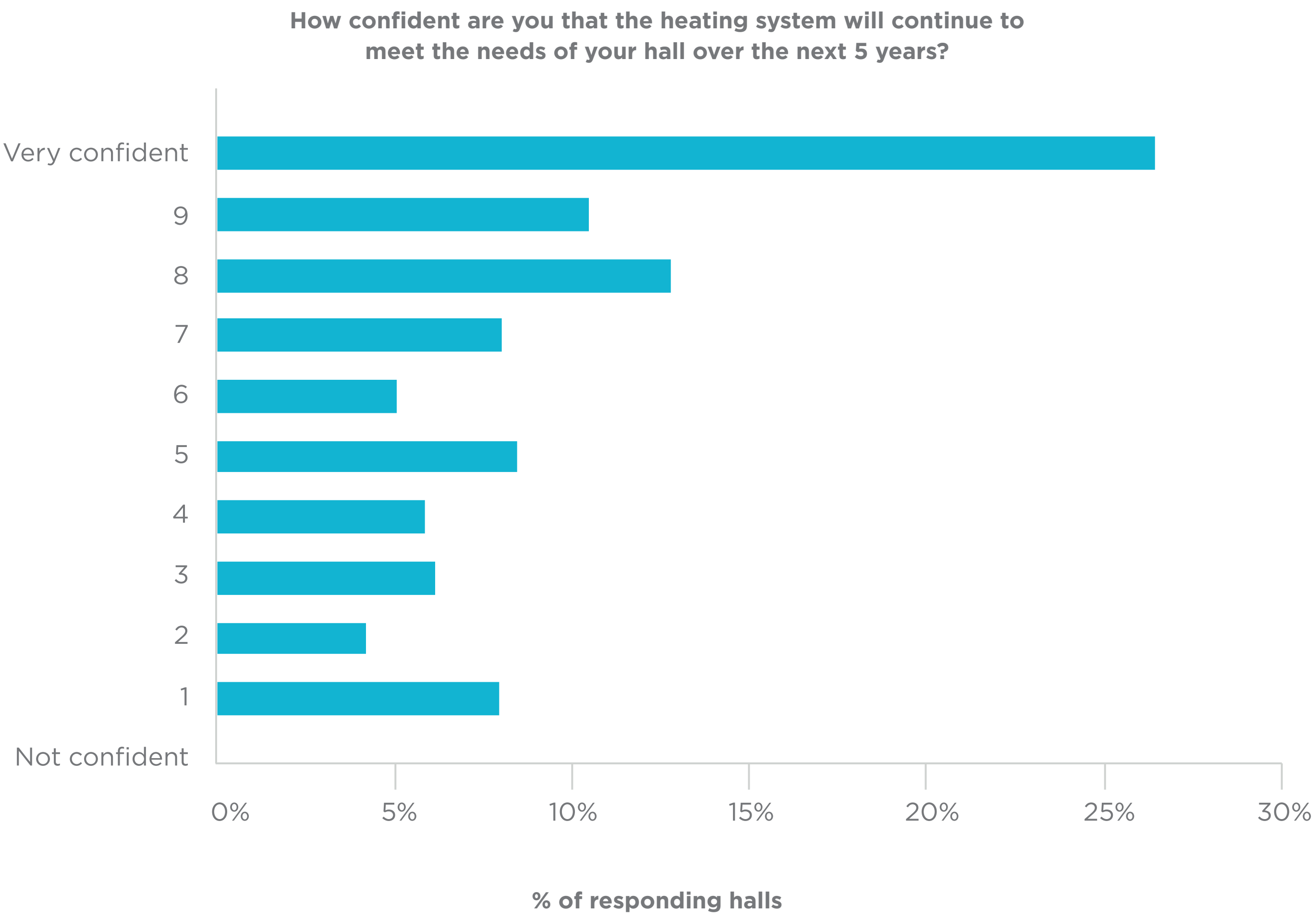
Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.



The 2020 survey reveals important findings in the proportion of halls adopting modern and low carbon heating technologies. The use of air source heat pumps increased from 0.5 per cent in 2009 to nearly 6 per cent in 2020, while the use of overhead radiant heaters has fallen compared to 2009 (by 7 per cent). Ground source heat pumps are now installed in 2 per cent of halls, up from a very low base in 2009. A small sample of halls completed the question regarding other sources of renewable energy. Whilst the base of respondents to this question was very low in 2009, comparisons with 2020 indicate potential changes. 246 respondent halls have solar photovoltaic panels installed, up from just 22 in 2009. Further research would be needed to verify this significant movement (essentially a tenfold rise since 2009) but it does suggest a greater take up of these technologies. Nonetheless there is clearly scope for considerably more investment in renewable energy at village halls.

The adequacy of heating systems

D30. On a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident) how confident are you that the heating system will continue to meet the needs of your hall and its users over the next 5 years?



Note: The base of respondents to this question was 2,013.

Generally speaking, halls are confident their heating system will meet their needs in the coming five years. However, a small proportion (8 per cent) are not confident at all. If this proportion were grossed up to the total village hall population of 10,000, that would represent 800 halls whose heating system will likely fail to meet their needs in the next five years. Adequate heating and warmth are crucial if community spaces such as these are to be fit for purpose, and they must ensure that inadequate heating does not pose a health risk to vulnerable users.

246 respondent halls have solar photovoltaic panels installed, up from just 22 in 2009.

The adequacy of heating systems

D30. On a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident) how confident are you that the heating system will continue to meet the needs of your hall and its users over the next 5 years?

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

	Taken		Plan to do		Cannot do		Not considered yet		No Response	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Double-glazing	1370	65	134	6.4	134	6.4	236	11.2	235	11.1
Monitoring electricity and gas use	1362	64.6	197	9.3	14	0.7	276	13.1	260	12.3
Energy saving light bulbs	1338	63.4	329	15.6	11	0.5	200	9.5	231	11
More efficient or timed controls for heating system	1271	60.3	306	14.5	20	0.9	260	12.3	252	11.9
Point of use water heater(s)	1058	50.2	139	6.6	27	1.3	532	25.2	353	16.7
Draught-proofing	804	38.1	249	11.8	65	3.1	594	28.2	397	18.8
Self-closing doors	754	35.8	97	4.6	92	4.4	756	35.8	410	19.4
PIR/movement sensors on lighting	726	34.4	134	6.4	26	1.2	802	38	421	20
Increased roof insulation (270mm)	671	31.8	276	13.1	189	9	612	29	361	17.1
An Energy Efficiency Survey	522	24.8	350	16.6	31	1.5	821	38.9	385	18.3
Installed a smart meter	443	21	274	13	111	5.3	841	39.9	440	20.9
Cavity wall insulation	439	20.8	83	3.9	496	23.5	638	30.3	453	21.5
Lowered ceilings	387	18.3	52	2.5	399	18.9	752	35.7	519	24.6
Cycle rack	325	15.4	132	6.3	66	3.1	1101	52.2	485	23
Install solar PV panels	275	13	170	8.1	245	11.6	946	44.9	473	22.4
Install renewable heating (air source heat pump, ground source heat pump or wood chip boiler)	172	8.2	131	6.2	168	8	1141	54.1	497	23.6
Other	54	2.6	42	2	8	0.4	358	17	1647	78.1

The adequacy of heating systems

Progress is being made in adopting energy saving measures. Certain measures have already been taken by over 60 per cent of halls; monitoring electricity and gas use, installing double-glazing windows, having efficient or timed controls for heating system, and fitting energy saving light bulbs. Far fewer have installed renewable energy generation systems such as solar photovoltaic panels (13 per cent) and renewal energy heating systems (8 per cent).

Substantially more halls have taken key energy saving measures when compared to 2009. Analysing only those cases responding to this question in 2020 shows that 14 per cent more halls are now monitoring their energy use, 10 per cent of halls are now using more efficient or timed controls for heating, and 6 per cent more halls are double glazed.

Interestingly, future installations and adaptions to save/create energy are likely to focus on those actions already taken, i.e. the lower cost "quick wins". A significant proportion of respondents intend to fit energy saving light bulbs (16 per cent) and install efficient or timed controls for heating systems (15 per cent). The most prevalent planned action is to undertake an energy efficiency survey, which raises questions about whether such surveys help target improvements in future.

The limitations of certain interventions are clear from, for instance, responses regarding cavity wall installation. Over a quarter of respondents suggest this is not possible, presumably considering the solid wall construction of their hall.

Adequate heating and warmth are crucial if community spaces such as these are to be fit for purpose...

Access by public transport

D32. Please tick if your village/town is served by the following forms of public transport?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Bus	1566	91.5	84.8
Community Minibus/social car scheme	479	28.0	*
Train	217	12.7	7.9
Total	**1712**	**100.0**	**-**

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question. The 2009 survey did not ask for responses on community minibuses/ social car schemes.

D33. If there is a bus service, when is it available?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Once a day	235	12.6	11.7
Daytime Monday to Friday (multiple times up to 6pm)	542	29.0	33.3
Day and evening Monday to Friday (multiple times)	71	3.8	6.6
Day and evening including weekends (multiple times)	689	36.9	48.4
Not Applicable	330	17.7	*
Total	**1867**	**100.0**	**-**

Note: Not applicable option means a base of 1867 was used. There were 242 non-responses. In 2009 a 'Not Applicable' option was not provided, so percentages were calculated on those served by a bus route of some type.

Access by public transport

D32 & A5. Is your village/town served by the following forms of public transport by approximate population served by the hall?

	Approximate population of the area served by the hall					
	0-1000		1001-4000		More than 4000	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Bus	654	85.6	590	95.0	322	98.5
Train	25	3.3	88	14.2	104	31.8
Community Minibus/social car scheme	212	27.7	166	26.7	101	30.9
Base	**764**		**621**		**327**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

While a little over 90 per cent of halls reported that their village is served by a bus service, only 37 per cent of these have services at weekends. 33 per cent only have weekday services, with 13 per cent of these only served once a day. For those without private transport, access to the village hall and other local facilities may be limited by this lack of public transport. Comparisons with 2009 responses are surprising. Despite national debates about the cutting of bus services, around 7 per cent more respondents reported their village/town being served by bus routes in 2020 compared to 2009. Conversely, changes can be seen in relation to weekend services. In 2009 nearly 50 per cent of respondents stated their villages/towns had such services, compared to 37 per cent in 2020. The impact of this mixed picture of bus provision in terms of accessing halls demands deeper analysis (see below).

Cross-tabulating public transport provision by the size of the population served by the hall shows that provision is much better in larger populations; a reflection of the issues faced in terms of transport accessibility in more rural locations. Nearly all the halls (98.5 per cent) with a local population of over 4,000 were served by bus. For those with populations less than 1,000, this figure dropped to 85.6 per cent. A similar picture was apparent for access to train. Community minibus or social car schemes, however, were more evenly distributed across the population groups.

While a little over 90 per cent of halls reported that their village is served by a bus service, only 37 per cent of these have services at weekends.

Access by train

D34. How far is the nearest railway station from the hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Less than 2 miles	332	16.2	7.3*
2-5 miles	706	34.4	39.9
More than 5 miles	1017	49.5	52.7
Total	**2055**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: In 2020 a 'less than 2 miles' option was provided. In 2009 the comparable option was 'In the village/town'. For indicative purposes we have presented the 2009 figure as 'Less than 2 miles'.

D34 & A5. How far is the nearest railway station from the hall by approximate population served by the hall?

	Approximate population of the area served by the hall					
	0-1000		1001-4000		More than 4000	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Less than 2 miles	74	6.9	136	20.9	122	36.5
2-5 miles	349	32.6	228	35.0	129	38.6
More than 5 miles	646	60.4	288	44.2	83	24.9
Base	**1069**		**652**		**334**	

Nearly half of all respondents in 2020 stated that their nearest railway station was more than five miles away. However, 16 per cent of respondents stated there was a railway station within 2 miles. This is an interesting finding as it is nearly double the proportion found in 2009, though differences in the surveys and the samples may explain some of this variation. Given the level of responses from halls serving larger areas in 2020 compared to 2009, this proximity to railway stations is perhaps to be expected.

Only 3.3 per cent of halls in population areas of less than 1,000 were served by train. The nearest railway station for nearly two-thirds of this group of halls was over five miles away. In contrast, for halls with populations of over 4,000, over a third of halls reported being within two miles of a railway station.

Nearly half of all respondents in 2020 stated that their nearest railway station was more than five miles away.

Changes in public transport

D35. In the last five years, would you say the frequency of public transport to your community has improved, remained roughly the same, or declined?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Improved	92	4.6
Remained roughly the same	926	45.8
Declined	1002	49.6
Total	**2020**	**100.0**

Contrary to some of the findings above regarding the proportion of communities served by buses, a significant proportion of respondent halls have seen the frequency of public transport to their community decline over the last 5 years. Only a small proportion (5 per cent) have seen improvements.

Geographical analysis shows no discernible patterns. Those counties with the highest proportion of halls stating there had been a decline in services were in Staffordshire, Dorset, Herefordshire, Tees Valley and Norfolk.

A significant proportion of respondent halls have seen the frequency of public transport to their community decline over the last 5 years...

6. Management and administration

Community ownership and control of local physical assets has long received policymakers support. Current efforts to promote localism and devolved control of local services and facilities is seen in various policies and funding settlement[6]. Yet, the difficulties for those charged with managing valued community assets is real, and ever more challenging[7]. Ageing buildings with increasing running costs, often requiring costly repairs and renewal, alongside stretched staff and volunteer capacity, managers face a number of challenges. And yet, these organisations often represent a model of local control and participation.

In the following section we explore some of the aspects of governance and management of halls, along with issues concerning licensing and other regulatory and legislative requirements.

Who runs halls?

E37. Who is the hall run by?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
A committee composed of user group appointees, elected and co-opted members	1037	52.3	87.8*
A committee of elected members/ trustees (with no power for user groups to appoint trustees)	568	28.6	*
The parish council, in the capacity of sole managing trustee/sub-committee of the council	128	6.5	5.0
A committee of a community association	70	3.5	5.0
The parochial church council	41	2.1	2.1
Other (please specify)	140	7.1	*
Total	**1984**	**100.0**	

Note: There were some differences in wording in 2009. The 2020 survey was the first year that respondents could specify the option ‘A committee of elected members/trustees (with no power for user groups to appoint trustees)’.

Half of all respondent halls are run by a committee of user group appointees, elected and co-opted members (on the lines of the ACRE Model Trust Deed for Village Halls). This is a significant reduction from the figures of 88 per cent in 2009, 74 per cent in 1998 and 75 per cent 1988. A significant number of halls are run by elected members and trustees, where there are no powers for user groups to appoint trustees. However, these are still a minority at 29 per cent. While only partial comparisons with the previous 2009 survey are possible in light of question changes, this appears to reflect a reported trend in difficulty recruiting representatives of user organisations resulting in more halls having wholly elected committees. The analysis shows a smaller proportion of responses from halls run by a community association (3.5 per cent) compared to 2009 (5 per cent). The higher response from those run by parish councils may reflect the higher response from halls serving larger villages and small towns, as well as the difficulty recruiting volunteer trustees which may have led some halls to pass management to the Parish Council instead.

[6] HM Government (2011). Localism Act 2011: overview

[7] CRESR (2019). Our Asset, Our Future.

Charitable status

E36. Is the hall a registered charity?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	1763	88.4	90.2
No	204	10.2	8.8
Don't know	27	1.4	1.0
Total	**2109**	**100.0**	**100.0**

E39. If the hall charity is unincorporated who is the holding or custodian trustee?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Individual trustees	555	33.3
The Parish or Town Council	403	24.2
Official Custodian for Charities at the Charity Commission	399	23.9
A church authority	56	3.4
Not applicable	222	13.3
Other	32	1.9
Total	**1667**	**100.0**

E38. If the hall is a registered charity, what legal form does it take?

	2020 Count	2020 %
A trust, an unincorporated charity	1317	71.7
Incorporated as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)	237	12.9
Incorporated as a charitable company limited by guarantee	81	4.4
A Community Benefit Society (IPS or Bencom)	6	0.3
Not applicable	197	10.7
Total	**1838**	**100.0**

E40. If the hall is not a registered charity, who manages it?

	2020 Count	2020 %
The Parish Council (or a Parish Council committee)	111	53
A Community Interest Company (CIC)	8	4
A Sports Club	4	2
Other	86	41
Total	**209**	**100.0**

Just over 88 per cent of respondent halls were registered charities in 2020, marginally less than 90 per cent observed in 2009, commensurate with more sports pavilions having responded, which are more likely to be Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs).

There has been a significant move towards limited liability status since 2009, when only 1.4 per cent of halls surveyed indicated that they were incorporated in any form. Around 17 per cent of those halls stating that they were a charity were incorporated in some form (either as a CIO or company limited by guarantee), with the majority having adopted the CIO structure. The creation of the new corporate structure for charities (CIOs) introduced in the Charities Act 2011 and the creation of a Charity Commission approved ACRE model CIO constitution, coupled with training for ACRE Network advisers, have assisted this transition.

For those organisations running halls not registered as a charity, the majority are parish councils (53 per cent) but a large minority also class themselves as 'Other'. When asked to specify, this latter group suggested that the hall was managed by some form of committee whose legal status is not identified (e.g. 'village hall committee').

The nature of property ownership

E41. What is the nature of the hall's ownership?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Freehold	1443	73.3	73.2
Leasehold	391	19.9	19.8
Don't know	135	6.9	7.0
Total	**1969**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Just over 88% of respondent halls were registered charities in 2020.

Over 70 per cent of the property owned by halls is with a freehold title. Around two in five halls held on a lease, with a small but important proportion not knowing their ownership status (7 per cent). There were no discernible changes in ownership against the finding in 2009.

This has important financial ramifications, but also in the terms of major renovations of buildings. Those halls needing, for instance, repairs to roofs and guttering are more likely to be freeholders than leaseholders.

Licensing

E42. Does the hall have a premises licence?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	1228	62.3	75.1
No	705	35.8	22.9
Don't know	39	2.0	2.0
Total	**1972**	**100.0**	**100.0**

E43. If the hall has a premises licence, what does it permit? (tick all that apply)

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Regulated entertainment	1188	95.3	*
Sale of alcohol	723	58.0	20.4
Sale of late-night refreshments	251	20.1	36.2
Total	**1247**		

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question. As the 2020 survey had no formal routing, the total number stating 'Yes' in E42 was marginally less than those answering E43. It is likely that some 'Don't knows' in E42 also answered E43.

Licensing

E44. If the premises licence includes the sale of alcohol, who is the designated premises supervisor (DPS)?

	2020 Count	2020 %
The committee	389	53
An individual volunteer	193	26
A local publican or caterer	83	11
An employee (eg Hall or Bar Manager, Parish Clerk)	67	9
A local shopkeeper	4	1
Total	**736**	**100.0**

There were changes to licensing regulation in mid-2009 for village and community halls and deregulation of entertainment from licensing in 2015 which may explain the inconsistencies in the responses when compared with the previous survey.

Just over 60 per cent of respondent halls have a premises licence. However, this represents a marked decline since 2009 when over 75 per cent of halls had such licenses. Nearly all of those stating they had a licence in 2020 (95 per cent) were permitted to host regulated entertainment. Close to 60 per cent of those holding a premises licence are permitted to sell alcohol, a significant rise from 36 per cent in 2009, while there has been no change in the proportion licensed to sell late-night refreshments.

Over 50 per cent of respondent halls with a license to sell alcohol suggest the supervisor (DPS) is 'The committee', indicating they have taken advantage of the relaxation in licensing rules since 2009 to apply for this change. Over a quarter identify the DPS as an individual volunteer.

Over 50 per cent of respondent halls with a license to sell alcohol suggest the supervisor (DPS) is 'The committee', indicating they have taken advantage of the relaxation in licensing rules since 2009 to apply for this change.

Music licenses and temporary events notices

E45. Does the hall have a licence to play copyright music?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	1317	67.2
No	490	25.0
Don't know	153	7.8
Total	**1960**	**100.0**

Music licenses and temporary events notices

E46. Approximately how many temporary events notices (TENs) were approved for the hall last year?

	2020 Count	2020 %
None	873	44.6
Less than 5	671	34.3
5-15	268	13.7
16-24	23	1.2
More than 24	14	0.7
Don't Know	108	5.5
Total	**1960**	**100.0**

Over two thirds (67 per cent) of respondent halls are licenced to play copyright music. This enables them to generate income through hosting of events and exercise classes.

At least 50 per cent of respondents answering this question had received an approved TEN in the previous 12 months. This is marginally down on 2009, when respondents stated that 57 per cent of halls had had TENs approved.

Use of kitchens

E47. How often is your kitchen used for food preparation other than tea and biscuits?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Often	490	24.7	16.9
Occasionally	1305	65.8	66.7
Never	166	8.4	16.4
Don't Know	23	1.2	*
Total	**1984**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: In the 2009 survey, 'Don't know' was not a response option.

E48. Is the hall, or any user group(s) registered with the local environmental health department as a "food premises/food business/food business operator"?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	542	27.6	18.8
No	1132	57.6	69.2
Don't Know	291	14.8	12.0
Total	**1965**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: The 2009 survey provided the response option 'Unsure' in place of 'Don't know'.

E49. How many of the volunteers or staff using the kitchen regularly have Basic Food Hygiene training?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Most	302	15.5
Some	796	40.8
None	272	13.9
Don't Know	580	29.7
Total	**1950**	**100.0**

Over 90 per cent of halls use their kitchens either often or occasionally for food preparation, suggesting a large proportion of halls are providing some form of catering. Just over a quarter of halls (28 per cent) are registered as food premises/business, or as a food business operator. Comparisons with the 2009 survey show that more halls are now being used regularly for food preparation, which is in-line with rises in activities such as community cafés and coffee mornings, which are important in addressing isolation and loneliness. In 2020 nearly 8 per cent more halls 'often' use their kitchens for food preparation. Similarly, a higher proportion of halls are registered with the local environmental health department in 2020, up nearly 9 per cent on 2009.

A total of 300 respondents answered the question about food preparation in their kitchens, as well identifying their kitchen as inadequate, in unsatisfactory condition and/or needing urgent repair. Around 250 respondent halls using their kitchens for food preparation often or occasionally fell into this category.

Not all volunteers and staff who use the kitchen regularly have Basic Food Hygiene training – only 16 per cent of respondent halls reported that most regular kitchen staff/volunteers have this training. This is only marginally higher than in 2009 (13 per cent). Nearly 40 per cent of those surveyed in 2020 said that only 'some' staff/volunteers have received such training, again at similar levels to than seen in 2009. A large proportion of halls (30 per cent) did not know if training had taken place.

Comparisons with the 2009 survey show that more halls are now being used regularly for food preparation, which is in-line with rises in activities such as community cafés and coffee mornings...

Risk Assessments and policies

E50. When was the halls Fire Safety Risk Assessment last carried out?

	2020 Count	2020 %
This year	623	31.2
Last year	892	44.7
More than 2 years ago	331	16.6
Don't Know	148	7.4
Total	**1994**	**100.0**

E51. When was a fixed electrical test last carried out?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Within the last 5 years	1822	92.9
5 years or more	66	3.4
Don't Know	74	3.8
Total	**1962**	**100.0**

Risk Assessments and policies

E52. Does your committee consider the following at least once a year?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Procedures for hiring out the building	1699	90.3
Fire risk assessment	1552	82.5
Risk assessment of the building	1534	81.5
Data protection	1149	61.1
Safeguarding for children	991	52.7
Safeguarding for vulnerable adults	870	46.2
Total	**1882**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

E53. Does your hall have a written....?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Hiring Agreement	1822	95.2	*
Fire procedures	1560	81.5	*
Health and safety policy	1349	70.5	66.2
Policy for the protection of children	852	44.5	28.2
Policy for the protection of vulnerable adults	751	39.2	7.7
Equal Opportunities policy	692	36.2	25.1
Total	**1914**		

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Over three quarters of halls have had a Fire Safety Risk Assessment carried out in the last two years, but 24 per cent either had not or didn't know, which demonstrates a worrying lack of compliance with Fire Safety legislation and a training requirement. A greater proportion (93 per cent) of halls have carried out fixed electrical checks, which are required every 5 years. Comparisons with 2009 data are not possible on these issues due to the differences between the surveys.

Four out of five respondent halls' committees consider or review building risk and fire risk assessments each year, which is best practice. Nine out of ten review their procedures for hiring out the building at least once a year. Only about half of hall committees reported that they considered safeguarding arrangements for children or vulnerable adults at least once a year. This is an issue that needs to be addressed given the findings later in the report about how halls are used, and the key users/ beneficiaries of them.

The proportion of respondent halls with written policies in these six main areas has increased since 2009, demonstrating increasing compliance with some of the legislative requirements. Nearly 10 per cent more halls have an equal opportunity policy in 2020. There has been a marked increase in the proportion of halls with policies for protecting children (+16 per cent) and policies for protecting vulnerable adults (+32 per cent). It remains the case however, that less than half of the halls surveyed have these policies, which may explain the lower number of halls considering issues relating to safeguarding at least once a year.

Who helps run halls?

E54. Roles fulfilled by full-time, part-time, volunteer and self-employed persons

Note: To account for respondents using blanks and zeros, the base for this analysis is all those respondents who identified at least one member of staff, volunteer, or self-employed person in any of the roles (1,964 respondents).	Approximate annual income									
	FT employee(s)		PT employee(s)		Volunteer(s)		Self-employed person(s)		No one in position	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Booking secretary	32	1.6	260	13.2	1429	72.8	127	6.5	116	5.9
Cleaner	16	0.8	555	28.3	386	19.7	779	39.7	228	11.6
Caretaker/handyman	31	1.6	234	11.9	766	39.0	197	10.0	736	37.5
Hall/centre manager	52	2.6	143	7.3	505	25.7	47	2.4	1217	62.0
Bar staff	7	0.4	44	2.2	289	14.7	34	1.7	1590	81.0
Grounds maintenance	16	0.8	75	3.8	591	30.1	289	14.7	993	50.6

E55. Which of the following does the committee issue to employees?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Job description	686	32.5	86.5
Contract of employment	514	24.4	56.1

Note: The base of respondents for this question is all survey respondents (2,109).

Who helps run halls?

Exploring the key roles undertaken within halls, reveals the heavy reliance on volunteers to keep facilities and services running. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of halls have a volunteer booking secretary, and nearly two out of five have volunteer caretakers or handypersons. Almost a third of halls are reliant on at least one volunteer to undertake grounds maintenance. Research conducted in 2019 suggests that the wellbeing benefit is significant and can be made equivalent to net additional household income[8]. Volunteering opportunities within community ownership was found to be equivalent to £131,926,000 in additional income.

Many halls are, however, also employing staff. We estimate this to be over 931 (44 per cent) of respondent halls. We estimate respondent halls are employing at least 650 cleaners and 314 caretakers/handypersons in full and part-time roles. If similar levels of employment exist across all village halls in England then they would be employing over 3,000 cleaners and nearly 1,500 caretakers/handypersons. This represents an important contribution to the rural economy. Again, research into community owned assets broadly suggests that full-time equivalent jobs in this sector provide £15.8m in fiscal benefit saving per annum and £966,000 in public value benefit due to better health per annum[9].

Responses suggest many halls (62 per cent) do not have a dedicated hall/centre manager who is either employed, a volunteer or self-employed. For certain services such as cleaning, halls are largely reliant on self-employed people. The effects of these costs on the financial status of halls is important, and the issue of financial health is explored in Section 7.

Only a third of respondent halls provide a job description for employees, and only a quarter issue a contract of employment. However, a considerable proportion of halls engage self-employed people, for whom different contractual arrangements are required, 40% having self-employed cleaners. The 2009 survey calculated percentages by excluding non-responses, suggesting over 86 per cent of halls provided job descriptions and 56 per cent issuing contracts. However, a different approach has been used here. In this 2020 survey we take all survey respondents as the base for percentages. The low level of contracts, would be an issue worthy of further exploration, but it is difficult to draw the conclusion as to whether this relates to changes in the nature of employment, or is due to gap in procedures and processes.

Exploring the key roles undertaken within halls, reveals the heavy reliance on volunteers to keep facilities and services running. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of halls have a volunteer booking secretary...

[8] CRESR (2019). Our Assets, Our Future. Available at http://shura.shu.ac.uk/25115/.

[7] ibid

Hiring agreements

E56. Does your hall issue a hiring agreement to users?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	1824	93.0
No	137	7.0
Total	**1961**	**100.0**

E57. During an average month, how many people (e.g. yoga teacher, pre-school staff, caterers etc.), excluding your own employees, use the hall to earn part or all of their living?

	2020 Count	2020 %
1	245	13.7
2	257	14.4
3	223	12.5
4	193	10.8
5	189	10.6
6	121	6.8
7	64	3.6
8	77	4.3
9	39	2.2
10 - 14	223	12.5
15 - 20	79	4.4
Over 20	79	4.4
Total	**1789**	**100.0**

As suggested in Section 7, hire charges make up a significant proportion of the income of halls. Nine out of ten respondent halls (93 per cent) issue hiring agreements to users. This is a marked increase on 2009, when the equivalent figure was 84 per cent.

Through hiring out space and other facilities, village halls provide an important infrastructure for people and small businesses to earn a living. From the respondent halls, at least 10,000 individuals are utilising halls for this purpose. One third of respondent halls had an average of between 1-3 people earning some of their living through use of hall facilities. However, two out of five halls (21 per cent) are providing the infrastructure for more than 10 people to earn all or part of their living. Comparisons with 2009 are difficult to draw given differing question formats in the two surveys.

Problems facing halls

E58. Does your hall suffer problems with?

	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Difficulty recruiting new committee members	980	50	592	30	241	12	136	7
Lack of support from the community	310	16	706	36	525	27	399	21
Lack of financial support	271	14	592	31	570	30	494	26
Lack of use	169	9	508	26	540	28	731	38
Lack of support from the parish council	106	6	236	12	506	27	1060	56
Vandalism	10	1	205	11	907	48	767	41

Note: Percentages calculated on the base of respondents selecting one of the four options 'regularly', 'occasionally', 'rarely' or 'never'.

The most prevalent problem faced by halls is difficulty recruiting new committee members. Half of all respondent halls are regularly grappling with this problem, and a further 30 per cent faced this issue occasionally. This situation has grown worse since 2009, when 39 per cent of respondents cited it as a regular problem and 34% regularly.

Lack of financial support remains another key problem, although a slightly lower proportion (45 per cent) of halls stated this was an issue faced regularly or occasionally. This compared to 49% in 2009. Other issues faced occasionally are a lack of support from the local community. Fortunately, vandalism is on the whole rare, although for a small minority it is a regular or occasional problem. This can have serious financial implications, affect insurance status and premiums as well as volunteer morale. Differences in survey questions make it difficult to assess longitudinal change in the experience of vandalism.

A positive picture emerges on demand for hall facilities with only 9 per cent suggesting they regularly suffer from a lack of use. 82 per cent of halls rarely or never suffer from a lack of support from parish councils, suggesting a positive set of relations are in place for most halls.

The most prevalent problem faced by halls is difficulty recruiting new committee members. Half of all respondent halls are regularly grappling with this problem...

Problematic issues and the nature of those problems

E59. Has the committee experienced problems dealing with any of the following in the last few years?

Agency/Issue	Biggest problem experienced	2020 Count	2020 %
Energy tariffs	Charges	258	49.3
Copyright music	Charges	234	53.1
Data protection	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	197	60.6
Water charges	Charges	194	56.2
Health and Safety	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	181	65.3
Charity Commission	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	179	55.8
Fire risk assessments	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	179	61.9
Insurance	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	167	51.5
Wastewater charge	Charges	129	57.6
Rate relief	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	95	51.6
Licensing - alcohol	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	71	50.0
HMRC	Time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers	71	60.2
Accessibility for disabled people	Understanding legislation or charges	63	58.3

Note: Percentages calculated on the base of respondents selecting one of the four options ‘charges’, ‘understanding legislation or charges’, ‘getting in touch’ and/or ‘time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers’.

Dealing with legislative requirements was a key problem for 20 per cent of halls in 2009 and this was explored in more detail in this previous survey than in 2020 (making direct comparisons difficult).

Survey respondents were asked about their experience in dealing with a number of agencies and issues related to corporate governance, licensing, regulatory requirements, insurance and taxation (see the first column in the table E59 above). For each of these agencies or issues respondents were asked to identify if they had experienced problems with ‘charges’, ‘understanding legislation or charges’, ‘getting in touch’ and/or ‘time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers’.

The recurring theme is that the ‘time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers’ is the biggest issue affecting respondents, and this is in relation to data protection, health and safety, fire risk assessments, the Charity Commission, rate relief, insurance and HMRC. Clearly, as halls are heavily dependent on volunteer time, these regulatory and other burdens weigh heavy on organisations with limited capacity.   However, the charges for copyright music, energy, water and wastewater tariffs were also an issue.

The recurring theme is that the ‘time on bureaucracy affecting volunteers’ is the biggest issue affecting respondents...

The committee and its approach

E60. As well as managing the hall and maintaining its fabric, which statement(s) describe your management committee?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
The committee takes a proactive role in running community events	1363	73.8	59.0%
The committee proactively markets the hall	1286	69.7	65.7%
The committee actively consults and involves the community in the use of the hall	1281	69.4	65.7%
The committee is keen to address loneliness and isolation among older people	1019	55.2	*
The committee proactively helps its user groups recruit new members and market activities	601	32.6	*
Total	**1846**		

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Management committees are considerably more proactive in running community events and marketing their halls than ten years ago. Nearly three quarters (74 per cent) are proactive in running community events, a rise of 15 per cent from 59 per cent in 2009. Over two thirds of hall committees (70 per cent) are engaged in proactively marketing their halls and its facilities, and similar proportions are active in consulting/involving their community in the use of the hall (69 per cent).

This is good news for communities because it suggests halls are better managed. Nonetheless, it may also reflect the imperative to sustain income to maintain a hall, because smaller proportions are active in addressing loneliness and isolation among older people and helping user groups with marketing. The recognition of the need to address loneliness and isolation is relatively new, an area which many halls have traditionally fulfilled but has required new impetus among others, and there is clearly still some way to go.

Management committees are considerably more proactive in running community events and marketing their halls than ten years ago.

Meeting the needs of marginalised individuals and groups

E61. Has the committee endeavoured to develop new activities/services in response to local needs, especially for more marginalised individuals or groups?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes, successfully	836	43.6
Yes, but so far unable to do so	418	21.8
No	540	28.2
Don't Know	123	6.4
Total	**1917**	**100.0**

E62. If yes, but unable to do so, why was this? (tick all that apply)

	2020 Count	2020 %
Limited capacity of volunteer committee members	312	56.7
Unable to recruit new volunteers to run activities	252	45.8
Difficulty engaging with marginalised people or groups	130	23.6
We have plans in hand and are raising funds for this purpose	102	18.5
The building is unsuitable and would need expensive alterations	77	14.0
We didn't know how to go about it	29	5.3
Other reasons	101	18.4
Total	**550**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

E63. Do you know people whose lives have changed for the better as a result of joining activities at your hall? (for example, they have improved physical activity/exercise, they are less isolated)

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	1633	85.2
No	284	14.8
Total	**1917**	**100.0**

Over two in five respondent halls (43 per cent) have successfully developed new activities and/or services in response to local need, and a further one in five (21 per cent) indicated that they have endeavoured to do so but have so far been unsuccessful. The main barrier cited by respondent halls to developing new services and activities in response to local need and for marginalised individuals or groups was the limited capacity of volunteer committee members, followed by the inability to recruit new volunteers to run such activities. This corroborates findings earlier in the report, that the most significant problems faced by halls relates to their capacity, and the ability to secure sufficient involvement in committees and other volunteer positions.

Despite the challenges in developing new services to meet local needs, over 80 per cent of halls feel they are changing peoples lives for the better. In later sections the uses of halls sheds light on the diverse benefits likely to be created by halls, particularly those related to the health and wellbeing of local residents.

Despite the challenges in developing new services to meet local needs, over 80 per cent of halls feel they are changing peoples lives for the better.

7. Finance

Village halls are cost efficient organisations thanks to the critical role volunteers' play. In 2009, 75 per cent of halls cost less than £10,000 p.a. to run[10]. And yet, many run on limited income which can make ongoing investment in the fabric of the buildings difficult. Ten years ago, three out of five halls were planning major improvements in the coming years, with significant numbers requiring over £200,000 in grant funding to undertake the work. Recent research[11] shows just how susceptible community owned assets are to emergency repair costs, which make financial planning for such works, and a clear approach to surplus generation, a critical issue.

The following section explores some of these issues in 2020, presenting findings on the income and expenditure of halls, along with other issues connected to their financial health, regulatory requirements, and financial conduct.

Operational expenditure

F64. For the last two years, approximately how much have your running costs been, including maintenance but excluding major repairs and capital expenditure?

	2017/18		2018/19	
	Count	%	Count	%
Not Applicable	45	2.5	36	2.0
Up to £4,000	435	24.5	411	23.2
£4,001 - £5,000	161	9.1	158	8.9
£5,001 - £10,000	429	24.2	435	24.5
£10,001 - £15,000	273	15.4	293	16.5
£15,001 - £20,000	161	9.1	149	8.4
£20,001 - £25,000	97	5.5	103	5.8
£25,001 – £50,000	132	7.4	136	7.7
Over £50,000	42	2.4	54	3.0
Total	**1175**	**100.0**	**1775**	**100.0**

[10] ACRE (2009) Rural Community Buildings in England: 2009 Key Findings
[11] CRESR (2019). Our Assets, Our Future. Available at http://shura.shu.ac.uk/25115/

Operational expenditure

Nearly 60 per cent of respondent halls had running costs of less than £10,000 pa for the last two years, with little change between 2017/18 and 2018/19. Unsurprisingly, given inflation, this is less than in 2009, when 75 per cent had running costs below £10,000. Only 16 per cent of halls had running costs over £20,000 in 2018/19. Running costs of £10,000 in 2008 would equate to £14,000 in 2020 accounting for inflation. In 2018/19, 75 per cent of halls had running costs up to £15,000. This suggests that the proportion of halls running on very low-cost bases is roughly the same in 2020 as in 2009.

Whereas in 2009 fewer than 100 halls had running costs over £25,000, in 2018/19 the number had almost doubled, and 42 had running costs over £50,000 p.a.

Nearly 60 per cent of respondent halls had running costs of less than £10,000 pa for the last two years...

Hire charges and running costs

F65. Do your hire charges and/or rental income cover running costs? (including maintenance but not major repairs)

	Approximate population of the area served by the hall							
	0-1000		1001-4000		More than 4000		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
A healthy surplus is usually made (over 2K)	149	15.9	157	27.5	83	31.0	389	21.9
A small surplus is usually made (under 2K)	294	31.4	169	29.6	71	26.5	534	30.1
It varies between surplus and deficit	170	18.1	115	20.2	53	19.8	338	19.0
No, fundraising helps cover expenses	242	25.8	72	12.6	24	9.0	338	19.0
No, Parish Council grant helps cover expenses	32	3.4	27	4.7	15	5.6	74	4.2
No, availability of other income sources usually helps cover expenses	50	5.3	30	5.3	22	8.2	102	5.7
Total	**937**	**100.0**	**570**	**100.0**	**268**	**100.0**	**1775**	**100.0**

F66. Roughly what proportion of running costs is normally covered by the hall's hire charges?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Up to 20%	127	7.3	5.9%
21-50%	221	12.7	11.4%
51-75%	301	17.3	18.4%
76-99%	526	30.2	34.7%*
100%	569	32.6	24.3%*
Total	**1744**	**100.0**	**94.7***

Note: The survey in 2009 used the wording 'More than 100% (ie surplus)', making direct comparisons with 2020 difficult. In 2009 the survey also provided an 'Unsure' option, hence the total percentage does not equal 100 per cent.

Hire charges and running costs

Over 50 per cent of respondent halls reported a small or healthy surplus made by hire charges and rental income. This compares favourably with 2009 when 46 per cent made some form of surplus. Nearly a third of halls (30 per cent) had to rely on fundraising, Parish Council grants or other income sources to cover expenses in 2020. This is marginally higher than in 2009 when 26 per cent of halls relied on some form of fundraising.

For a third of respondent halls, hire charges cover 100 per cent of the costs associated with running and maintaining the space, a significant rise from 24 per cent in 2009. A further 30 per cent are able to cover between 76-100 per cent of costs with such charges. Variations in the survey questions in 2020 make longitudinal analysis difficult. Nonetheless, in 2009, 59 per cent of halls met 75 per cent or more of their costs with hire charges, and this compares favourably to 2020 when the equivalent proportion was 63 per cent.

This finding is significant. It suggests that, ten years on, a greater proportion of halls are able to use hire charges to meet the majority of their costs; a sign of financial health. Yet in a sign of polarisation, for 20 per cent of halls hire charges only covered a maximum of 50 per cent of costs in 2020. The equivalent figure in 2009 was 17 per cent of halls.

Over 50 per cent of respondent halls reported a small or healthy surplus made by hire charges and rental income.

Hire charge reviews

F67. How often does the committee review hire charges?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Never	8	0.5
Annually	1034	58.5
Regularly (e.g. every 2/3 years)	614	34.7
Less frequently	99	5.6
Unsure	13	0.7
Total	**1768**	**100.0**

A greater proportion of halls in 2009 were reviewing charges annually (66 per cent) compared to 2020 (59 per cent). Given fluctuations in running costs – due to varying levels of inflation in items such as salaries and utility bills - it is significant that two out of five halls either never review hire charges, or do so at intervals of 2-3 years or more.

Financial support

F68. Do you receive regular financial support towards running costs of your hall from your...?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Parish council	495	65.8
Local charitable trusts/charities	104	13.8
District council	66	8.8
Church funds	39	5.2
County or Unitary Authority	29	3.9
Other	203	27.0
Total	**752**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

F69. Please provide the approximate annual amount of ordinary income which usually comes from the following sources (does not include capital sources).

	Income (£)	Average income (£)
Hiring charges	19,485,593	11,999
Enterprise/trading (such as catering, bar, recycling) or contracts	1,326,471	6,837
Renting out part of property for private or commercial use	1,304,666	5,877
Other sources	686,097	3,966
Fundraising (inc 100 clubs)	2,863,211	3,027
District/unitary/county grant aid	213,458	3,006
Membership fees	237,012	2,788
Parish council grant aid	802,836	1,916
Donations	1,336,279	1,861
Renting out part of property for public services	349,781	1,521
Gift Aid tax reclaims	142,281	1,206
Bank interest/investments	292,725	442
Total	**29,040,410**	

Base: 1,629.

Financial support

There is one major source of financial support for most halls and that is parish councils. Two thirds of halls responding to this question (66 per cent) indicated in 2020 that they receive regular financial support from this source. Local trusts and charities are also key providers of funding for 15 per cent of halls. However, marked changes have occurred over the last ten years. Nine out of ten (91 per cent) of halls receiving regular grants in 2009 received these from their parish council. Whilst differences in survey questions in 2020 may, in part, explain the drop to 66 per cent, it still suggests that halls are receiving less financial support from parish councils. Nonetheless, they remain a key source of, on average, small levels of support.

There is one major source of financial support for most halls and that is parish councils.

Halls are deriving revenue from a number of sources, the most significant of these being hire charges, fundraising, donations, trading and/or contracts and renting out part of property for private or commercial use. Each of these is providing halls with over £1m in total revenue. By far the largest income source is hire charges, and the survey suggests halls are securing over £19m in such fees, equivalent to £12,000 per hall. Across all the listed revenue sources, halls are securing over £29m in total. It was not possible to track changes in this picture from 2009 due to survey differences.

Approach to finances and fundraising

F70. Which of the following best describes your committee's approach to finance and fundraising?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
The committee thinks the hall will remain financially viable over the next five years	1264	72.4	68.4%
The hall has a reserves policy	883	50.5	41.6%
The committee prepares a planned repair and maintenance programme	824	47.2	38.0%
The committee undertakes fundraising only for improvements/reserves	803	46.0	41.7%
The committee prepares a budget each financial year	723	41.4	33.2%
The committee undertakes fundraising specifically to keep hire charges for voluntary groups affordable	405	23.2	26.1%
The committee has to undertake fundraising to pay revenue costs	347	19.9	27.6%
The committee has a business plan, containing a budget	258	14.8	10.6%
The committee does not undertake fundraising	258	14.8	12.8%
Total	**1747**		

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Approach to finances and fundraising

There is evidence of a marked improvement in financial planning by halls. Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of respondent hall committees believe that their hall will remain financially viable over the next 5 years, marginally up on results from 2009. Whilst only 40% of halls prepare an annual budget, this proportion has increased by over 8 per cent since 2009. Nearly half of halls (47 per cent) in 2020 were taking a proactive approach to repair and maintenance with a planned programme, increasing by nearly 10 per cent since 2009, and similar increases in 2020 are apparent in the proportion of halls with a reserve policy (+9 per cent). These changes in planning and policies are reflected in the decrease in halls needing to undertake fundraising to pay revenue costs, down by nearly 7 per cent since 2009.

Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of respondent hall committees believe that their hall will remain financially viable over the next 5 years...

Voluntary fundraising

F71. Including funds raised for capital projects, roughly how much money has been raised by voluntary fundraising in the last two years?

	2017/18		2018/19	
	Count	%	Count	%
Less than 1,000	607	41.4	564	38.4
1,001-2,000	259	17.7	247	16.8
2,001-3,000	173	11.8	180	12.3
3,001-4,000	98	6.7	91	6.2
4,001-5,000	71	4.8	96	6.5
5,001-10,000	125	8.5	139	9.5
More than 10,000	132	9.0	150	10.2
Total	**1465**	**100.0**	**1467**	**100.0**

The income secured through fundraising was stable from 2017/18 to 2018/19, with around 40 per cent of halls reporting that they raised less than £1,000 for each period. The distribution of halls across other categories was far more even with 18 per cent securing £1,001-£2,000 and a further 12 per cent deriving £2,001-£3,000 in fundraising.

Rate relief

F72. What level of rate relief does the hall receive?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Mandatory 80% charitable relief	404	23.8
85- 95%	55	3.2
100% relief	1061	62.4
Other	37	2.2
Our hall does not receive any rate relief	143	8.4
Total	**1700**	**100.0**

F73. If less than 100%, does the hall have to reapply for relief each year?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	158	24.1
No	295	45.0
Unsure	202	30.8
Total	**655**	**100.0**

F72 & A3. What level of rate relief does the hall receive by ACRE member counties?

ACRE Network member county name	Mandatory 80% charitable relief		85 – 95%		100% relief		Other		Our hall does not receive any rate relief	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Bedfordshire	7	1.7	5	9.1	31	2.9	1	2.7	4	2.8
Berkshire	17	4.2	3	5.5	9	0.8	1	2.7	8	5.6
Buckinghamshire	4	1.0	1	1.8	21	2.0	2	5.4	3	2.1
Cambridgeshire	19	4.7	0	0.0	36	3.4	1	2.7	7	4.9
Cheshire	2	0.5	0	0.0	23	2.2	0	0.0	6	4.2
Cornwall	4	1.0	0	0.0	32	3.0	2	5.4	1	0.7
Cumbria	12	3.0	2	3.6	61	5.7	0	0.0	4	2.8
Derbyshire	14	3.5	0	0.0	31	2.9	2	5.4	4	2.8
Devon	7	1.7	1	1.8	63	5.9	0	0.0	6	4.2
Dorset	19	4.7	5	9.1	26	2.5	2	5.4	1	0.7
Durham	0	0.0	0	0.0	19	1.8	0	0.0	3	2.1
Essex	22	5.4	4	7.3	29	2.7	1	2.7	4	2.8
Gloucestershire	12	3.0	0	0.0	30	2.8	1	2.7	1	0.7
Hampshire	11	2.7	2	3.6	48	4.5	1	2.7	9	6.3
Herefordshire	2	0.5	0	0.0	16	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Worcestershire	3	0.7	0	0.0	19	1.8	1	2.7	1	0.7
Hertfordshire	11	2.7	1	1.8	19	1.8	1	2.7	3	2.1

Rate relief

F72 & A3. What level of rate relief does the hall receive by ACRE member counties (Continued)

ACRE Network member county name	Mandatory 80% charitable relief		85 – 95%		100% relief		Other		Our hall does not receive any rate relief	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Humber & Wolds (East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire & North East Lincolnshire)	5	1.2	5	9.1	11	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.7
Isle of Wight	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	2.7	0	0.0
Kent	12	3.0	0	0.0	22	2.1	2	5.4	4	2.8
Lancashire	2	0.5	0	0.0	10	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.7
Leicestershire & Rutland	5	1.2	2	3.6	17	1.6	2	5.4	4	2.8
Lincolnshire	15	3.7	5	9.1	25	2.4	1	2.7	3	2.1
Norfolk	9	2.2	0	0.0	12	1.1	2	5.4	2	1.4
Northamptonshire	11	2.7	2	3.6	32	3.0	1	2.7	1	0.7
Northumberland	15	3.7	0	0.0	58	5.5	1	2.7	4	2.8
Nottinghamshire	7	1.7	4	7.3	9	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.7
Oxfordshire	16	4.0	0	0.0	42	4.0	1	2.7	9	6.3
Shropshire	6	1.5	0	0.0	24	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Somerset	6	1.5	3	5.5	63	5.9	1	2.7	6	4.2
Staffordshire	12	3.0	1	1.8	42	4.0	1	2.7	3	2.1
Suffolk	17	4.2	0	0.0	47	4.4	1	2.7	6	4.2
Surrey	16	4.0	2	3.6	19	1.8	1	2.7	9	6.3
Sussex (East & West)	24	5.9	3	5.5	15	1.4	2	5.4	6	4.2
Tees Valley	4	1.0	0	0.0	5	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Warwickshire	12	3.0	0	0.0	8	0.8	0	0.0	6	4.2
West of England (South Gloucestershire, Bath, North East Somerset, North Somerset & Bristol)	1	0.2	1	1.8	8	0.8	1	2.7	1	0.7
Wiltshire	8	2.0	2	3.6	36	3.4	1	2.7	7	4.9
Yorkshire (North, South, West)	34	8.4	1	1.8	42	4.0	2	5.4	4	2.8
Total	404	100	55	100	1061	100	37	100	143	100

Rate relief

Charitable halls are eligible for 80 per cent mandatory rate relief and legislative powers enable local authorities to further support community halls by offering up to 100 per cent rate relief. In 2009, of those halls receiving some rate relief (91 per cent of halls) 72 per cent received the full 100 per cent relief. In 2020, the equivalent figure was 62 per cent, a fall of 10 per cent. Around 5 per cent less halls are receiving the mandatory 80 per cent relief rate. In a time of potential bureaucratic burdens and a lack of knowledge about rate relief, a quarter of halls (24 per cent) have to reapply for the relief each year, with a further 30 per cent unsure about the frequency of applications. This is an area where local authorities could reduce the bureaucratic burden for themselves, as well as halls, by reducing the frequency of applications for relief to, say, every 3-5 years. Earlier results show that hall finances do not vary so significantly as to justify annual review of rate relief.

Earlier results show that hall finances do not vary so significantly as to justify annual review of rate relief.

Approaches to rate relief vary geographically, and table F72 above shows how respondents from certain counties make up a greater proportion of the number of halls receiving 100 per cent rate relief. For instance, 5.9 per cent of respondents receiving this level of rate relief were based in Devon, even though respondents from this county only made up 4.7 per cent of the sample. Conversely, respondents from Yorkshire make up 5.4 per cent of respondents, but only 4 per cent of those receiving 100 per cent relief. There may be a number of reasons for this geographical variation related to local authority policies and procedures, but also the knowledge and capacity of halls to secure the relief.

Volunteer tasks

F74. Which of the following tasks related to the building are usually carried out by volunteers?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Small repairs/routine maintenance/checks	1562	93.9
Risk assessments	1358	81.7
Most maintenance work except specialist tasks (e.g. electricity)	873	52.5
Redecorating (internal)	633	38.1
Major repairs and improvements (e.g. roofing, extensions)	22	1.3
Other	135	8.1
Total	**1663**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Volunteer tasks

F74 & A5. Which of the following tasks related to the building are usually carried out by volunteers by approximate population served by the hall?

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.	Approximate population of the area served by the hall					
	0-1000		1001-4000		More than 4000	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Small repairs/routine maintenance/checks	884	96.1	491	92.3	187	88.6
Risk assessments	766	83.3	425	79.9	167	79.1
Most maintenance work except specialist tasks (e.g. electricity)	549	59.7	242	45.5	82	38.9
Redecorating (internal)	366	39.8	191	35.9	76	36.0
Major repairs and improvements (e.g. roofing, extensions)	12	1.3	6	1.1	4	1.9
Other	71	7.7	42	7.9	22	10.4
Total	**920**		**532**		**211**	

F75. Roughly how many hours per month do volunteers spend running the hall (excluding committee meetings)?

	Hours	Average Hours
Bookings and key holding	16040	11.2
Finance/Treasurer	13376	8.7
Fundraising	12148	11.7
Secretarial/admin	10152	7.2
Small repairs	7825	5.5
Negotiations with hirers/users	4719	4.4
Supervising/liaising with staff	2527	3.8
Assessments (e.g. risk)	2462	2.1
Total	**69249**	

Base: 1,567.

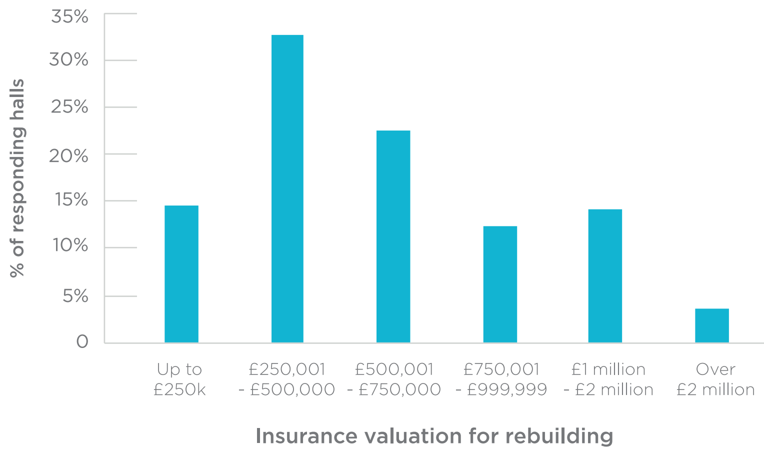
Volunteers are essential to the running of village halls. The vast majority of halls (94 per cent) require volunteers to carry out small repairs, routine maintenance and checks, with 53 per cent of halls using volunteers to carry out all but specialist maintenance work. Over 80 per cent of halls use volunteers to conduct risk assessments, and nearly 40 per cent for internal redecorating. These figures are broadly consistent with ten years ago.

Segmenting the analysis suggests, generally speaking, that the involvement of volunteers in building related tasks diminishes with population size. Those halls serving larger areas (e.g. those with populations over 4,000) are less likely to use volunteers to complete small repairs/routine maintenance/checks, risk assessments, maintenance work (except specialist tasks) and internal redecorating, when compared to halls serving smaller areas (i.e. those with populations of less than 1,000 people). This may also be related to the size of halls, and formal arrangements for caretaking/handypersons being required for larger buildings.

Buildings Insurance

F76. Approximately how much is your hall insured for if it needs to be totally rebuilt?

	2020 Count	2020 %
up to £250,000	257	14.5
£250,001- £500,000	581	32.7
£500,001- £750,000	400	22.5
£750,001 - £999,999	221	12.5
£1 million - £2 million	251	14.1
Over £2 million	65	3.7
Total	**1775**	**100.0**



F77. When was the hall's rebuilding insurance valuation last checked?

	2020 Count	2020 %
This Year or Last year	865	48.7
Two – five years ago	514	29.0
More than 5 years ago	128	7.2
Unsure	268	15.1
Total	**1775**	**100.0**

Nearly half of respondent halls (47 per cent) are valued (for buildings insurance purposes) at less than £500,000. Just under one third (30 per cent) are valued at more than £750,000. Whilst direct comparisons with 2009 are difficult in light of survey differences, we can compare the proportion of halls valued at more than £1m. Revealing the extent of inflation in build costs in the intervening years, the proportion of halls which would cost over £1m to rebuild has nearly quadrupled, standing at 5 per cent in 2009 and 18 per cent in 2020.

The data from 2020 suggests the value of respondent halls - using rebuild costs alone - is between £1-1.5bn[12], and when this is grossed-up to all village halls in England, between £5.2-8.9bn. However, recent research[13] suggests that, on average, property values are 59 per cent higher than valuations for insurance purposes. Applying such assumptions to village and community halls suggests the value of halls nationally could be in the region of £9bn-15bn.

These value increases potentially impact on hall insurance premiums. Given that only a small proportion of halls are borrowing significant sums of money (see F84 below), it is unlikely these value increases are being leveraged in any substantive way for additional lending.

Nearly 50 per cent of halls have had their rebuilding insurance valuation checked in the last current or previous calendar year, with around 30 per cent more having had this checked in the last two to five years, an improving picture on an essential piece of financial management.

[12] This estimated range assumes that those halls valued at 'over £2 million' are on average valued at £2m (lower estimate) or on average £3m (upper estimate). Those valued at 'up to £250,000' have an assumed value on average of £100,000 (lower estimate) and £250,000 (upper estimate).

[13] Direct Line Group (2019). Bricks and mortar account for only 59 percent of a property's market value. Accessed at: https://www.directlinegroup.co.uk/en/news/brand-news/2018/bricks-and-mortar-account-for-only-59-percent-of-a-property-s-ma.html

Value Added Tax and past building work

F78. Is your hall registered for VAT?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	75	4.3	4.3
No	1619	92.1	91.0
Unsure	63	3.6	4.7
Total	**1757**	**100.0**	**100.0**

F79. Have you carried out improvements/ extensions/rebuilding work in the last five years?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	1233	70.4	64.7
No	513	29.3	34.9
Unsure	6	0.3	0.4
Total	**1752**	**100.0**	**100.0**

F80. If yes, what was the cost?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Less than £20,000	632	50.9
£20,001 - £50,000	337	27.2
£50,001 - £100,000	127	10.2
£100,001 - £250,000	86	6.9
£250,001 - £500,000	36	2.9
£500,001 -£750,000	9	0.7
£750,001 - £999,999	7	0.6
£1million and over	7	0.6
Total	**1241**	**100.0**

F81. If yes, roughly what proportion of the cost did you meet from your own funds?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
None	114	9.0	8.3
Up to 25%	388	30.5	35.4
26-50%	197	15.5	16.6
51-75%	124	9.7	10.8
More than 75%	118	9.3	6.6
100%	331	26.0	20.0
Total	**1272**	**100.0**	**97.7***

Note: The survey in 2009 provided an 'Unsure' option, and hence the total percentage for 2009 does not equal 100 per cent.

The vast majority of halls (92 per cent) are not registered for VAT. Very little has changed in the last ten years, as the table F78 above shows.

This hints at the potential unrecovered VAT from halls. In 2020, 70 per cent had undertaken improvement work, built extensions, or rebuilt part or all of their building in the last five years. This represents an increase on 2009 when only 65 per cent of halls had undertaken such building work. It is difficult to establish the precise value of such work (in light of the use of cost categories rather than finite values), but for respondent halls this is likely to be in the region of £46.6-97.6m[14]. Given that 91 per cent of halls are not VAT registered, this means that the irrecoverable VAT from such work could be in the region of £9.3m-19.5m. This would be significantly higher than in 2009, when irrecoverable VAT was estimated at £7m.

It is estimated that the irrecoverable VAT from improvement work undertaken in the last five years could be in the region of £9.3m-£19.5m.

[14]This estimated range assumes that where the cost of improvement work was in the 'less than £20,000' it was on average £5,000 (lower estimate) or on average £20,000 (upper estimate). Work costing 'over £1 million' was assumed to be on average £1m (lower estimate) and £1.5m (upper estimate).

The above analysis add evidence to existing calculations on the gross value added (GVA) to the national economy of community owned assets, as well as their benefit to local economies through local expenditure. In total, assets in community ownership are estimated to provide £216m worth of net additional GVA to the economy per annum. The total net additional expenditure of assets in community ownership into their local communities is estimated at £148m per annum[15].

To meet the cost of building work 26 per cent of halls met 100 per cent of the cost of the works with their own funds. Just under half of the respondent halls (47 per cent) matched at least 50 per cent of costs with their own funds. This is an increase from 2009 when only 37 per cent were at least matching other funding 50/50. The effect is that more halls are now meeting a bigger proportion of improvement costs from their own funds, either fundraising or reserves built up from hire charges, or both.

To meet the cost of building work 26 per cent of halls met 100 per cent of the cost of the works with their own funds.

Grant aid

F82. In the last five years, have you applied for grant aid from any of the following?

	Applied Successful		Applied Unsuccessful		Applied waiting to hear		Didn't apply		No response	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Parish Council (not S106 or CIL funding)	601	28.5	29	1.4	11	0.5	527	25.0	941	44.6
District Council (not S106 or CIL funding)	411	19.5	27	1.3	11	0.5	627	29.7	1033	49.0
Charitable trusts	381	18.1	50	2.4	21	1.0	585	27.7	1072	50.8
County Council	364	17.3	23	1.1	14	0.7	652	30.9	1056	50.1
Private sector, Charitable funds run by banks, supermarkets, DIY companies, Energy companies, Local companies	326	15.5	88	4.2	21	1.0	582	27.6	1092	51.8
Lottery - Awards for All small grants	323	15.3	85	4.0	22	1.0	617	29.3	1062	50.4
Landfill Trust Funds (e.g. Biffa, Sita, Viridor, Wren, Veolia)	226	10.7	76	3.6	14	0.7	684	32.4	1109	52.6

[15] CRESR (2019). Our Assets, Our Future. Available at http://shura.shu.ac.uk/25115/.

Grant aid

F82. In the last five years, have you applied for grant aid from any of the following? (Continued)

	Applied Successful		Applied Unsuccessful		Applied waiting to hear		Didn't apply		No response	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Section 106 or CIL funding (from development)	154	7.3	36	1.7	34	1.6	763	36.2	1122	53.2
Other funder	125	5.9	11	0.5	12	0.6	477	22.6	1484	70.4
Lottery - Reaching Communities Fund	81	3.8	66	3.1	23	1.1	748	35.5	1191	56.5
Village Halls Improvement Grant Fund (Defra/ACRE)	60	2.8	19	0.9	24	1.1	795	37.7	1211	57.4
Heritage Lottery Fund	47	2.2	42	2.0	1	0.0	795	37.7	1224	58.0
EU funds (e.g. LEADER)*	41	1.9	14	0.7	1	0.0	816	38.7	1237	58.7
Sports England	33	1.6	26	1.2	8	0.4	812	38.5	1230	58.3
National Park or AoNB	26	1.2	2	0.1	2	0.1	825	39.1	1254	59.5
Housing Association	25	1.2	4	0.2	2	0.1	827	39.2	1251	59.3
Power to Change Community Business Fund	10	0.5	12	0.6	.	.	823	39.0	1264	59.9
Arts Council	6	0.3	10	0.5	1	0.0	840	39.8	1252	59.4

Note: LEADER funding is no longer available

Grant aid

F82 and by ACRE Network member county name.

The table below shows the number of halls that successfully applied for any type of grant funding.

ACRE Network member county name	2020 Count	2020 %	% of successful applicant halls within the county
Bedfordshire	30	2.4	55.6
Berkshire	21	1.7	46.7
Buckinghamshire	23	1.9	60.5
Cambridgeshire	39	3.2	52.0
Cheshire	20	1.6	54.1
Cornwall	27	2.2	49.1
Cumbria	62	5.0	63.3
Derbyshire	34	2.8	49.3
Devon	54	4.4	52.9
Dorset	36	2.9	54.5
Durham	19	1.5	63.3
Essex	50	4.1	70.4
Gloucestershire	29	2.4	45.3
Hampshire	54	4.4	60.0
Herefordshire & Worcestershire	36	2.9	61.0
Hertfordshire	29	2.4	74.4
Humber & Wolds (East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire & North East Lincolnshire)	18	1.5	75.0
Isle of Wight	2	0.2	33.3
Kent	28	2.3	46.7
Lancashire	10	0.8	66.7

Grant aid

F82 and by ACRE Network member county name (Continued)

The table below shows the number of halls that successfully applied for any type of grant funding.

ACRE Network member county name	2020 Count	2020 %	% of successful applicant halls within the county
Leicestershire & Rutland	20	1.6	47.6
Lincolnshire	34	2.8	56.7
Norfolk	17	1.4	51.5
Northamptonshire	35	2.8	63.6
Northumberland	57	4.6	64.8
Nottinghamshire	14	1.1	42.4
Oxfordshire	44	3.6	52.4
Shropshire	25	2.0	78.1
Somerset	60	4.9	57.7
Staffordshire	43	3.5	59.7
Suffolk	62	5.0	68.9
Surrey	31	2.5	44.3
Sussex (East & West)	37	3.0	54.4
Tees Valley	6	0.5	54.5
Warwickshire	23	1.9	52.3
West of England (South Gloucestershire, Bath, North East Somerset, North Somerset & Bristol)	10	0.8	58.8
Wiltshire	36	2.9	49.3
Yorkshire (North, South, West)	58	4.7	49.6
Total	**1233**	**100**	

Supportive trusts and foundations

F83. Please tick if you were funded by any of the following charitable trusts (tick all that apply).

	2020 Count	2020 %
Other local grant giving charities	244	53.2
A Community Foundation for your area	179	39.0
Garfield Weston Foundation	126	27.5
Bernard Sunley Foundation	98	21.4
Rank Foundation	25	5.4
People's Postcode Lottery	23	5.0
Trusthouse Charitable Foundation	12	2.6
Prince's Countryside Trust	3	0.7
Total	**459**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

There was a good response to the survey from applicants to the new Defra Village Halls Improvement Grant fund.

When attempting to secure funding from other sources, halls had varying levels of success. Respondent halls were much more likely to succeed in applications to Parish Councils than any other funder. Nearly 30 per cent of respondents indicated that they had successfully applied for funding from their Parish Council in the past 5 years. Respondent halls have also successfully applied for funding from District Councils (20 per cent) and County Councils (17 per cent) in the last 5 years, although the numbers appear to have fallen from 2009. A further 15 per cent had successfully secured funding from the Lottery Awards for All, which provides small grants of between £300 and £10,000 for grassroots and community activities and Reaching Communities has continued to assist numbers of halls. Landfill Trusts remain an important source of funding, although geographically restricted. CIL funding has not made a widespread contribution but is known to have contributed significant sums in locations where projects are eligible.

There is evidence of significant geographic disparity. For instance, at the higher end, around 75 per cent of halls in both Hertfordshire and Humber & Wolds reported successful applications. In contrast, Kent and Nottinghamshire report much lower rates of success by hall (47 and 42 per cent, respectively). For most counties, the success rate across reporting halls ranges between 45-65 per cent.

Certain charitable trusts are key funders for village and community halls. Local Community Foundations have provided financial support to 39 per cent of halls receiving funding from trusts. The Garfield Weston Foundation and Bernard Sunley Foundation have continued to be reliable sources of funding, usually for larger projects, provided funding to over 200 halls, and each funding around a quarter of those responding to this question.

There was a good response to the survey from applicants to the new Defra Village Halls Improvement Grant fund, launched in 2019, which may indicate that a higher proportion of survey respondents are those actively seeking funding, than would be the case among halls as a whole.

Loan finance

F84. Has loan finance contributed towards work carried out?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	86	5.7	9.0
No	1435	94.3	91.0
Total	**1541**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: In 2020 an 'unsure' option was provided but not in 2009. Hence, calculations have been calculated on a base of only those answering 'yes' or 'no' on both surveys.

F85. If yes, who raised the loan?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Management Committee	59	67.0
Parish Council	29	33.0
Total	**88**	**100.0**

F86. If the management committee raised the loan, who loaned money to the hall? (tick all that apply)

	2020 Count	2020 %
Private individual(s)	23	39.0
ACRE (Defra) Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund	18	30.5
County/District/Unitary Council	15	25.4
Charity Bank	7	11.9
Total	**59**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Only a small proportion of halls accessed loan finance in 2020 (6 per cent), a marked decrease since 2009 when nearly one in ten (9 per cent) had secured debt finance for building related work. Not all loans were raised by the management committee, 29 having worked with their Parish Council to raise the loan, with the other two thirds raising it themselves.

A total 59 respondents identified their lender, with two in five loans coming from private individuals and nearly a third from ACRE's Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund. A quarter of loans were raised from councils at different tiers of local government. The biggest change from 2009 seems the drop in finance being provided by private individuals, some 8 per cent lower in 2020.

The use of funding and finance

F87. What kind of work was finance required for?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Major renovation (e.g. roof, floor, kitchen and toilets, heating)	452	51.0
Smaller scale/improvements to one or two facilities e.g. kitchen, toilets, windows, heating	379	42.8
Equipment/fixtures/fittings	319	36.0
Energy efficiency/renewable energy sources	196	22.1
Facilities for disabled people	165	18.6
Car park extension/ improvement	102	11.5
Other	88	9.9
Extension to accommodate new or growing use	78	8.8
Replacing an old hall	33	3.7
Building a new hall (not replacing one)	11	1.2
Total	**886**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

F88. What were the reasons for the work?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Poor condition of old hall	500	52.4	45.8
To upgrade toilet or kitchen facilities	476	49.9	*
To reduce environmental impact	260	27.3	17.6
Health and safety requirements	254	26.6	39.7
Development of facilities for new activities	249	26.1	23.7
To improve access	204	21.4	*
Car park extension/ improvement	122	12.8	*
Hall too small	72	7.5	7.2
Had no hall	6	0.6	0.5
Total	**954**		

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question. Differences between the 2020 and 2009 surveys limits direct comparisons on only some response options.

The use of funding and finance

F89. Has this improved the use of the hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	635	64.8
No	102	10.4
Unsure – too early to tell or difficult to ascribe to building work	243	24.8
Total	**980**	**100.0**

F90. How has the use of the hall improved?

	2020 Count	2020 %
New activities now take place	453	72.5
More people can attend existing activities	354	56.6
Infirm and disabled people can now attend activities	220	35.2
Total	**625**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Over half (51 per cent) of those who secured funding and finance used it to meet the cost of major renovations. These improvements, and dedicated works, also targeted specific types of improvements. Around one in five halls used funding and finance to provide facilities for disabled people or for energy efficiency measures. Whilst direct comparisons with 2009 are not possible due to differences in the surveys, ten years ago 67 per cent stated that funding and finance was being used for major renovations. This suggests that in 2020 a greater proportion of funds have been directed to smaller scale improvements or other specific changes.

The poor condition of the hall, and the need to upgrade toilet or kitchen facilities, were cited by around half of respondents as reasons for the work undertaken in the past 5 years. Close to 30 per cent also undertook work to reduce the environmental impact of their hall, to meet health and safety requirements, or for the development of facilities for new activities. Some comparison is possible with 2009, and this reveals that a greater proportion of halls were using funding and finance to address the condition of their (old) buildings in 2020 (+6 per cent). Spending on improvements to address their environmental impact was another area of change over time, with nearly 10 per cent more halls investing in this area in 2020 compared to 2009.

These investments are usually aimed at improving the use of halls, though for a proportion (10 per cent) this does not impact on the user's experience, indicating it is probably fabric refurbishment. For those halls undertaking improvement work, this was impacting in two key ways; creating the capacity/space to enable more people to use the hall and access services (57 per cent of halls), and in enabling the provision of new activities (73 per cent).

The poor condition of the hall, and the need to upgrade toilet or kitchen facilities, were cited by around half of respondents as reasons for the work undertaken in the past 5 years.

Planned improvements

F91. Do you have any of the following major improvements planned in the next five years?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Smaller scale/improvements to one or two facilities e.g. kitchen, toilets, windows, heating	669	47.5
Major renovation (e.g. roof, floor, kitchen and toilets, heating)	568	40.4
Equipment/fixtures/fittings	532	37.8
Energy efficiency/renewable energy sources	407	28.9
Car park extension/improvement	270	19.2
Facilities for disabled people	221	15.7
Extension to accommodate new or growing use	142	10.1
Replacing an old hall	42	3.0
Building a new hall (not replacing one)	19	1.4
Other	124	8.8
Total	**1407**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Nearly half of respondent halls had small scale renovations planned in the next 5 years, and 40 per cent intend to do major renovations, for example of the roofing, flooring, kitchens or toilets. This represents a marked difference from 2009, when a much higher proportion of halls (55 per cent) were focusing their future improvements on major renovations. Some of this variation may be explained by differences between the two surveys and the response options provided. In 2020, less than 5 per cent of halls are thinking of rebuilding (either on the current site or somewhere else). This is significantly less than the equivalent 8 per cent in 2009.

Older halls (i.e. those built pre-1945) were more likely to have major renovations planned to their hall, or smaller scale adaptations such as improving facilities for disabled people or energy efficiency improvements, than those built after 1945. This reflects the age of these halls and the need to invest in their fabric to keep older buildings fit for purpose. Post-1945 halls were as likely or more to focus, in future, on extensions and improvements to both car parking and/or the buildings.

Nearly half of respondent halls planning improvements in the next 5 years are planning small scale renovations, and 40 percent intend to do major renovations...

The cost and contracting of future improvement work

F92. Please give approximate cost [of major improvements] if known.

	2020 Count	2020 %
Less than £20,000	614	48.1
£20,001 - £50,000	320	25.1
£50,001 - £100,000	141	11.0
£100,001 - £250,000	98	7.7
£250,001 - £500,000	52	4.1
£500,001 -£750,000	14	1.1
£750,001 - £999,999	13	1.0
£1million and over	25	2.0
Total	**1277**	**100.0**

F93. Is the committee planning to apply for a grant for this work?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	1079	77.6
No	311	22.4
Total	**1390**	**100.0**

F94. If yes, when will the committee apply for a grant?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Already applied	211	19.4
Within 2 years	781	71.7
More than 2 years	97	8.9
Total	**1089**	**100.0**

F95. Is the hall management committee planning to use local builder(s) and suppliers for this work? (choose one)

	2020 Count	2020 %
All/Almost all of the work	1170	85.9
More than half of the work	83	6.1
About half of the work	42	3.1
Less than half of the work	25	1.8
None of the work/not much at all	42	3.1
Total	**1362**	**100.0**

Halls are planning improvement works, worth significant sums and with potentially important benefits to local economies. Whilst just under half of respondent halls (48 per cent) will undertake work costing less than £20,000 in the coming five years, 16 per cent will undertake work costing more £100,000. The potential value of this work will be between £81m-£154m. When grossed up to the proportion of all halls in England likely to be undertaking improvement work (assuming our sample represents the broader population of halls), the value of such work in the next five years would be between £384m-£730m. The local impact of this could be very significant indeed, as over 85 per cent of halls plan to use local builders and suppliers for 'all/almost all' of the work to be undertaken. This mirrors a pattern of localised expenditure seen in 2009, where similar, a proportion of halls (90 per cent) intended to use local builders for all or almost all of the work.

This necessitates a demand for grant funding, as over three quarters of halls intend to apply for grants to fund the improvement work. This represents a significant demand and challenge to funders in meeting their financial needs. And much of this demand is likely to come in the near future as 72 per cent of halls are planning to apply for grants within two years. In 2009 a higher proportion of grant applications were in the pipeline at the time of the survey (25 per cent) compared to 2020 when only 19 per cent had applications for grants in train. This suggests there is a bigger unmet demand for grant funding for improvements ten years on.

8. Use of the halls

Village halls are used for a wide range of purposes, helping to provide space for important social events, education, sports, recreation and so on. For halls, the ways in which their space can be used is central to the income generating activities that can be undertaken.

Respondents were first asked whether a range of activities take place in their hall. Using these responses, the most common activities are detailed, alongside the most common new activities. Respondents were also asked - if an activity is taking place – whether it is increasing or decreasing in frequency. Using this information we are able to highlight the activities growing and declining most significantly. To calculate the percentages for this latter issue we use the total respondents stating that a specific activity is taking place, rather than the total respondents to the overall question.

When comparing 2020 results to those in 2009 we have used the original data tables from that work, not the 2009 report itself. In the 2009 report a standard base of 2097 was used across all 'use' categories to derive percentages. In 2020 we have calculated the base of respondents separately for each category of use, to ensure the percentages are as accurate as possible and comparable to the original data tables. Consequently, direct comparison is not possible and instead the major changes are highlighted.

G96. Events and Celebrations

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %	Most common new activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Private parties	1645	98.0	Voluntary/statutory sector conferences/training	136	15.1
Hall committee meetings	1641	97.3	Political party meetings	124	13.8
Charity auctions, jumbles sales/bazaars, etc.	1443	86.0	Concerts	111	12.5
Polling station	1410	85.1	One-off fundraising events	86	10.9
Public meetings	1352	84.5	Weddings	66	9.2

Private parties and hall committee meetings are the most common occasional events and celebrations that take place. Nearly all halls reported these two activities. Other occasional activities that were common were charity events (86 per cent), acting as a polling station (85 per cent), and public meetings (84 per cent).

Some halls reported new activities taking place. Common amongst these were voluntary/statutory sector conferences and training (15 per cent) and political party meetings (14 per cent).

G96. Events and Celebrations

Activities that have increased in use	2020 Count	2020 %	Activities that have decreased in use	2020 Count	2020 %
Private parties	742	46.6	Whist drives	237	37.1
Voluntary/statutory sector conferences/training	345	31.1	Discos	236	32.4
One-off fundraising events	333	27.7	Dances	222	31.1
Weddings	313	26.1	Weddings	205	23.8
Polling station	256	24.3	Fairs/fetes	194	18.1

The types of activities that already take place but have either increased or decreased is variable. Private parties were by far the most common activity that has become more popular with 47 per cent of halls used for this purpose reporting that such events have increased. Whist drives, discos, and dances were amongst those that halls reported have declined in use. For halls that host weddings, a quarter reported an increase in these events. In contrast a further quarter reported that they had seen a decrease in the number of weddings they host. This indicates some variability or churn in the use of halls for weddings.

G97. Educational

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %	Most common new activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Pre-school/nursery school	509	33.1	Cookery	49	36.0
Local history classes/society	470	31.0	Foreign language classes	31	31.6
Other adult classes/WEA/U3A	346	23.2	IT or Computer courses/clubs	46	29.3
Guides/Brownies/Rainbows	334	22.0	Sleepovers (e.g. Brownies, cubs, Duke of Edinburgh)	52	20.6
Adult education	262	17.7	After school/breakfast club	26	20.2

The most common educational related activity that takes place in halls is pre-school/nursery, with nearly a third of responding halls reporting this. Whilst this activity was also the most common in 2009 (50 per cent), the 2020 data suggests fewer halls are reporting this activity.

A small number of halls reported new activities taking place. These activities were varied, including sleepovers (e.g. for Brownies, Cubs), cookery, computer and foreign language classes. Activities relating to adult education in particular have seen an increase among those halls used for this purpose. And - to a lesser extent - pre-school/nursery and after school/breakfast clubs have also increased in use.

G97. Educational

Activities that have increased in use	2020 Count	2020 %	Activities that have decreased in use	2020 Count	2020 %
Other adult classes/WEA/U3A	108	30.8	IT or Computer courses/clubs	47	29.9
Adult education	84	29.2	Summer holiday play scheme	68	26.4
Pre-school/nursery school	142	27.2	Foreign language classes	22	22.4
After school/breakfast club	34	26.4	Guides/Brownies/Rainbows	77	21.6
Primary school	35	24.0	Sleepovers (e.g. Brownies, Cubs, Duke of Edinburgh)	52	20.6

G98. Arts and Crafts

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %	Most common new activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Concerts	743	49.7	Music lessons	28	28.0
Art classes/Art club	714	46.0	Book Club or Literary Society	38	26.4
Amateur dramatics/panto-mime	679	44.0	Film shows	141	25.7
Dance and Clubs (e.g. ball-room etc.)	678	44.0	Choral society or choir	81	22.0
Art/craft exhibitions	647	43.1	Folk/jazz/other music club	42	20.3

A number of arts and crafts related activities are commonly held in halls, including, concerts, art classes, and amateur dramatics. Data from the 2009 survey shows these have all continued to be popular, although concerts and art classes/club are marginally more popular now. Amongst the activities that have been increasingly taking place, music lessons, film shows, sewing classes, and band practices were shown to be the most common new activities.

G98. Arts and Crafts

Activities that have increased in use	2020 Count	2020 %	Activities that have decreased in use	2020 Count	2020 %
Children's dance classes	191	34.4	Tea Dances	46	25.8
Dance and Clubs (e.g. ball-room etc.)	180	26.4	Visiting professional theatre/ music	152	24.9
Film shows	139	25.4	Band practices	133	23.3
Sewing classes/Upholstery etc.	142	25.2	Concerts	159	21.7
Art classes/Art club	159	22.5	Music lessons	21	21.0

Dancing has been resurgent as an activity undertaken in halls, with both children and adult dance classes being the existing activities that have increased the most. In contrast, tea dances, concerts, band practices, and visiting professional theatre/music are reported as having decreased the most in use.

Rural touring

G99. Does your hall use Rural Touring as a way to get performance into your hall?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	269	15.9
No	1426	84.1
Total	**1695**	**100.0**

The National Rural Touring Forum is a network that seeks to support rural touring schemes[16]. Only 16 per cent of respondent halls reported using Rural Touring to attract performers to their halls, so there is scope to promote visiting productions through the NRTF.

G100. Is your hall connected to a Rural Touring Scheme as a promoter?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	185	11.0
No	1508	89.0
Total	**1693**	**100.0**

[16] https://www.ruraltouring.org/what-is-rural-touring

G101. Sports

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %	Most common new activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Fitness classes such as aerobics	1332	80.5	Disability sports	17	35.4
Yoga	968	61.5	Circuits	55	25.9
Carpet bowls	512	33.1	Walking group	49	24.0
Martial arts	451	29.4	Table tennis	82	19.0
Table tennis	428	28.2	Yoga	177	18.6

Fitness classes are very clearly the leading sport related activity that is undertaken in halls (81 per cent). This is an increase on 2009, when 62 per cent of responding halls stated this was taking place and these classes had also grown from previous surveys. Other sports and exercises commonly taking place include yoga (62 per cent), carpet bowls (33 per cent), martial arts (29 per cent), and table tennis (28 per cent).

Of activities reported as being new to a hall, fitness classes and yoga were the most common. Table tennis was also an activity that had started to take place in some halls for the first time, but all also show considerable churn, from the table below.

Activities that have increased in use	2020 Count	2020 %	Activities that have decreased in use	2020 Count	2020 %
Fitness classes such as aerobics	651	49.7	Skittles	21	22.3
Yoga	345	36.3	Darts/billiards/snooker/pool	31	18.7
Short tennis	13	31.0	Table tennis	75	17.4
Football training	49	28.3	Martial arts	76	16.8
Table tennis	112	26.0	Badminton	44	16.2

G102. Social and recreational

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %	Most common new activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Christenings or wakes	1345	85.7	Men's shed	10	30.3
Coffee mornings or afternoon teas	1137	71.5	Wildlife/ecology/ sustainability group	53	25.5
Church/PCC events or office	821	52.9	Model car/railway/plane club	26	23.2
WI/Mothers Union etc.	766	49.0	Dog training	71	22.3
Parent and Toddler	596	39.0	Wine tastings	65	21.6

Christenings and wakes are the most common social and recreational activity, taking place in 2020, 86 per cent (comparison with the 2009 survey is not possible). Other social activities, such as coffee mornings and church events, are more widespread today compared to 2009.

Men's Sheds[17] (a recent community innovation) is the most common activity that is new to a hall with 30 per cent reporting this.

Activities that have increased in use	2020 Count	2020 %	Activities that have decreased in use	2020 Count	2020 %
Dog training	91	28.5	Mothers Union	17	34.7
Social club (with bar)	44	25.9	Youth Club	75	34.1
Coffee mornings or afternoon teas	271	24.5	Young Farmers	41	30.4
Men's sheds	8	24.2	Wine tastings	71	23.6
Wildlife/ecology/ sustainability group	46	22.1	Royal British Legion	17	21.3

Dog training (29 per cent) was the activity that had increased the most amongst halls offering this activity. Coffee mornings and social clubs (with a bar) were also increasingly popular. The growth in such events perhaps reflecting the importance of providing activities which address loneliness and isolation.

The further drop in Youth Clubs - identified as decreasing by 34 per cent of halls where this takes place - is perhaps an indication of the effect of austerity measures on local authority funding for youth services.

[17] https://menssheds.org.uk

G103. Services, social enterprises and wellbeing

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %	Most common new activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Polling station	1392	84.3	Emergency response facility	166	36.8
Parish council meetings	1267	78.4	IT/resource centre/ telecottage	20	31.7
Public information boards	581	38.6	Community café	92	31.7
Emergency response facility	468	31.2	Voluntary care scheme	12	26.7
Luncheon club	319	21.3	Health/medical clinics	23	24.0

Of the activities that serve the local community, use as a polling station is the most common, echoing the 2009 survey. Use for parish council meetings is also very widespread. There is growing provision for halls to be equipped as an emergency response facility in times of crisis. In addition, there seems to be a growing realisation of the importance of addressing isolation and loneliness, particularly among older people, which is apparent from the growth of community cafés, and luncheon clubs. Those halls used as a base for health-related services (such as baby clinics, doctor's surgeries) are seeing a decrease in such use. This is discussed further in the next section.

Activities that have increased in use	2020 Count	2020 %	Activities that have decreased in use	2020 Count	2020 %
Slimming World/ Weightwatchers or similar	79	32.8	Clinic (baby)	17	35.4
Community café	73	25.2	Doctor's surgery	11	33.3
Polling station	317	23.7	MP's surgery	36	26.3
Blood donor sessions	21	22.1	Outreach office for statutory service	13	24.1
Health/medical clinics	21	21.9	Meals on wheels	3	20.0

G104. Commercial use

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Company meetings/exhibitions/training events	668	43.9
One-day sales	359	23.7
Antique fairs	147	9.9
Commercial auctions	46	3.2

Only four activities fall into the 'commercial use' category, of which the most common is occasional company meetings/exhibitions/training events, which have become more widespread since 2009, when 21 per cent of halls reported them.

Hall facilities

G106. Which of the following facilities are attached to the hall? (Tick all that apply)

Most common activities	2020 Count	2020 %
Playing field	424	48.8
Play equipment	396	45.6
Garden	332	38.2
Football pitch	253	29.1
Picnic site	162	18.6
Tennis court	142	16.3
Recycling Centre	123	14.2
Cricket pitch	122	14.0
Barbecue	74	8.5
Bowling green	62	7.1
Outdoor Gym	54	6.2
Netball court	44	5.1
Skate park	43	4.9
Allotments	31	3.6
Skittle Alley	19	2.2
Squash court	4	0.5
Rugby pitch	3	0.3
Total	**869**	

Note: Percentages total more than 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Playing fields and play equipment were the most likely facilities to be connected to halls, which mirrors the findings from 2009. It should be noted that less than half of survey respondents completed this question, and the survey did not definitively capture the halls which had none of these facilities attached.

Local usage

G107. Roughly what proportion of local residents use the hall regularly?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Up to 25%	1050	61.2	74.5
26-50%	534	31.1	18.4
51-75%	114	6.6	5.5
76-100%	18	1.1	1.6
Total	**1716**	**100.0**	**74.5**

Nearly two-thirds of responding halls reported that up to 25 per cent of their local residents used their hall regularly, which is less than the 75 per cent reporting the same figures in 2009. This suggests that more halls report that a higher proportion of the local population use the facilities than previously, with more reporting that between 26-50 per cent of the local population use the hall regularly.

G108. Do you consider the use of your hall represents the profile of the community it serves?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	1084	63.4
No	374	21.9
Don't Know	251	14.7
Total	**1709**	**100.0**

Two-thirds of responding halls consider the use of their hall to represent the profile of the community it serves.

Two-thirds of responding halls consider the use of their hall to represent the profile of the community it serves; 22 per cent did not feel the community was represented in the use of the hall. While it should be concerning that the use of a community hall does not reflect the community it serves, it may simply be a reflection of the fact that some communities have more than one facility, with other facilities serving some groups better.

Local usage

G109. How often is the hall used by people from each group?

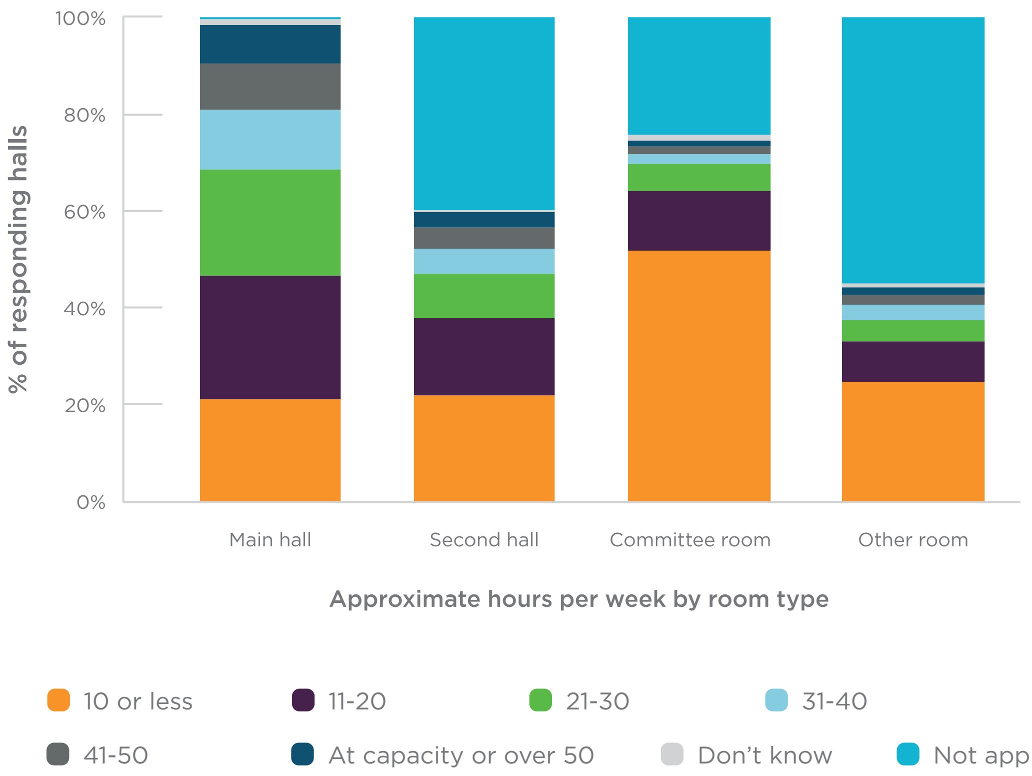
	Occasionally		Regularly (more than once a month)		Never	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Under 5 years	574	35.3	843	51.8	210	12.9
6-10 years	652	40.8	764	47.8	183	11.4
11-18 years	730	47.9	532	34.9	262	17.2
19-65 years	278	16.8	1370	82.6	11	0.7
Over 65 years	216	13.0	1439	86.4	11	0.7
Disabled/infirm people	834	53.1	599	38.1	138	8.8
Black or minority ethnic groups	711	47.4	143	9.5	645	43.0

83 per cent of 19-65-year olds use halls regularly (more than once a month) and this increases to 86 per cent for those over 65. This is an increase on the 2009 survey, where the figures were 75 and 73 per cent respectively. Younger people (11-18 years) were more likely to use halls occasionally (48 per cent) than regularly (35 per cent). Users who have a disability or are from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) groups and use a hall regularly have decreased since 2009. 42 per cent of disabled/infirm users then did so regularly whilst in 2020 this has decreased to 38 per cent. For regular BAME users 10 per cent did so regularly, down from 20 per cent in 2009. This is an issue that warrants further study to ensure that halls remain inclusive.

Usage of meeting rooms

G110. In a typical week, approximately how many hours in total is each meeting room in the hall in use?

	Main hall		Second hall		Committee room		Other room	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
10 or less	366	21.1	214	21.9	589	51.6	186	24.6
11 - 20	447	25.7	155	15.9	143	12.5	64	8.5
21 - 30	380	21.9	91	9.3	63	5.5	33	4.4
31 - 40	214	12.3	49	5.0	25	2.2	26	3.4
41 - 50	164	9.4	43	4.4	17	1.5	14	1.9
At capacity or over 50	140	8.1	30	3.1	14	1.2	12	1.6
Don't know	18	1.0	6	0.6	13	1.1	5	0.7
Not applicable	8	0.5	388	39.8	277	24.3	416	55.0
Total	**1737**	**100.0**	**976**	**100.0**	**1141**	**100.0**	**756**	**100.0**

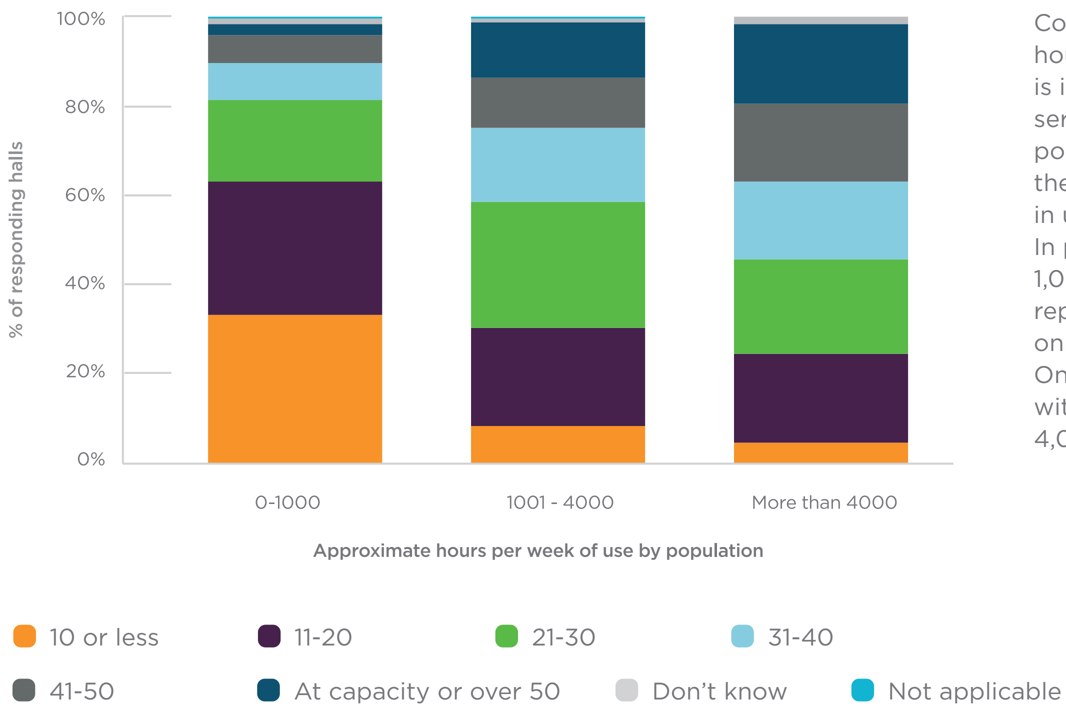


Nearly half (47 per cent) of responding halls stated that their main hall is used on average for 20 hours per week or less. A further third (34 per cent) of halls estimated it was used between 21-40 hours. This is broadly in line with data from the 2009 survey, which indicates that the intensity of use has not changed. Rooms that would be expected to be used less intensively, including committee rooms and 'other' rooms were indeed used for fewer hours.

Usage of meeting rooms

G110. (main hall only) and size of the population served

Base: 1737	Approximate population of the area served by the hall					
	0-1000		1001-4000		More than 4000	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
10 or less	307	33.4	47	8.5	12	4.5
11 - 20	273	29.7	121	21.9	53	20.1
21 - 30	170	18.5	155	28.0	55	20.8
31 - 40	76	8.3	91	16.5	47	17.8
41 - 50	55	6.0	63	11.4	46	17.4
At capacity or over 50	25	2.7	68	12.3	47	17.8
Don't know	9	1.0	5	0.9	4	1.5
Not applicable	5	0.5	3	0.5	0	0.0
Total	**920**	**100.0**	**553**	**100.0**	**264**	**100.0**



Comparing the number of hours per week the main hall is in use by the population served shows that as population increases so does the number of hours the hall is in use, as would be expected. In populations of less than 1,000, 33 per cent of halls reported their main hall was only in use for 10 hours or less. Only 5 per cent of those halls with populations of more than 4,000 reported the same.

Difficulties meeting needs

G111. Does the committee find it difficult to meet the community or user's needs?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	486	28.2
No	941	54.5
Unsure	299	17.3
Total	**1726**	**100.0**

G112. If yes, to G111, please explain the difficulties the committee has experienced.

	2020 Count	2020 %
Lack of storage	204	44.5
Lack of parking	198	43.2
Lack of internet/broadband/mobile phone signal	145	31.7
Only have one meeting space	134	29.3
Hall is too small, a larger space is needed	122	26.6
Poor condition of hall toilets	108	23.6
Lack of support/funding from outside authorities	106	23.1
Poor condition of hall kitchen	101	22.1
Other	101	22.1
Ceiling too low (e.g. for badminton)	78	17.0

Base: 458.

The ability of the committee that runs the hall to meet the community or user's needs is clearly very important to the future sustainability of the hall. Over a quarter of halls (28 per cent) stated that they find it difficult to meet these needs and a further 17 per cent were unsure. Of those halls responding 'Yes' to G111, the most common difficulties faced included lack of storage and parking, a lack of internet and limited meeting space.

Excluded uses

G113. Please list any activities that are excluded from using the hall.

	2020 Count	2020 %
Indoor ball sports, go karting etc.	309	71.5
Activities excluded by Premises Licence	307	71.1
Dog training or other Animals	174	40.3
Teenage or 21st birthday parties	172	39.8
Bouncy castles	139	32.2
Religious or political activities	56	13.0
Commercial use	38	8.8
Other (e.g. Band practice)	23	5.3
Dancing (e.g. Line Dancing, Tap Dancing)	21	4.9
Total	**432**	

Whilst this section has demonstrated the wide range of activities that can and do take place within halls, there are some limitations. Indoor ball sports/go karting (72 per cent) and activities excluded by Premises Licences (71 per cent) are the most common exclusions. Furthermore, whilst dog training takes place in many halls, it is prohibited in others.

9. Working with others

Major constitutional and political changes in recent years have met with a global health pandemic to create a future which seems financially, socially and politically uncertain. Halls are part of the fabric of communities struggling to deal with the impacts of COVID-19, being both a potential provider of valued, vital support, but also susceptible to changing norms in terms of face-to-face interactions and use of public spaces.

As noted in the introduction, the majority of survey responses were completed prior to the restrictions imposed because of COVID-19, and hence the survey is not a statement of how halls may now think about their future. Nonetheless, as restrictions are lifted, halls will try to take forward their plans as best they can, and the findings below show us what their intentions were in early 2020. This provides insights into future use and users, and the needs of halls in terms of training, support and advice.

Use of halls by statutory services and community businesses

H114. Are you developing the use of your hall for statutory or similar services? (i.e. space for health professionals or other NHS services)

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	126	7.3	10.9
No	1589	92.7	73.4
Total	**1715**	**100.0**	**84.3***

Note: The survey in 2009 provided an 'Unsure' option, and hence the total percentage for 2009 does not equal 100 per cent.

H115. Is your hall used as a venue for a community business?

	2020 Count	2020 %
Yes	161	9.5
No	1542	90.5
Total	**1703**	**100.0**

Halls are part of the fabric of communities struggling to deal with the impacts of COVID-19...

Use of halls by statutory services and community businesses

H116. How does the community business support the hall charity?

	2020 Count	2020 %
The business is run and managed by the hall committee, so a surplus benefits the hall	79	30.6
The space is hired out at market rent	71	27.5
The space is hired out at a rent that is helping the business to become sustainable	54	20.9
There is no financial benefit to the hall	40	15.5
Surpluses from the business are covenanted back to the hall charity	14	5.4
Total	**258**	**100.0**

Note: The base of respondents is 258 having removed non-responses and those selecting 'Not applicable'.

A small proportion of respondent halls (7 per cent) were developing the use of their halls for a range of statutory services including health checks and appointments, as well as diabetes clinics, blood donor sessions, flu jabs and mental health groups. One interesting finding from the open responses element of this question is that a number of halls have been used by health authorities for purpose of testing for COVID-19.

This usage by statutory or related bodies is marginally down on 2009 when 11 per cent of halls were looking to expand the use of halls for these purposes. However, some of the change may be accounted for by differences in response options in the two surveys.

With the advent of Power to Change there is increased interest in, and support for, community business. These might be simply defined as local organisations that are accountable to their community, and that use the profits they generate to deliver positive local impact. It is recognised that halls themselves may fit this definition, but also host other such organisations. Nearly 10 per cent of respondent halls suggest that community businesses used their venue, although a lack of awareness or understanding of the term 'community business' may have affected this figure.

Further questioning asked how community business then support their halls, though some respondents answered this question, who did not answer the previous question about use of the venue. Halls derive some benefit from financial contributions that help create a surplus (30 per cent of halls used for this purpose) and through hiring charges (28 per cent).

With the advent of Power to Change there is increased interest in, and support for, community business.

Training and support

H117. Are there aspects of running a community building where your committee could benefit from training or support?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	1102	68.0	18.7
No	518	32.0	51.3
Total	**1620**	**100.0**	**70.0***

Note: The survey in 2009 provided an 'Unsure' option, and hence the total percentage for 2009 does not equal 100 per cent.

H118. If yes, which are the five most important aspects of training and support. (1 = most important, 5 = least important)

Importance	Applying for funding		Fundraising locally		Health and Safety		Fire Safety Risk Assessments		Recruiting/ motivating volunteers	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1	415	19.7	40	1.9	113	5.4	50	2.4	196	9.3
2	112	5.3	141	6.7	143	6.8	118	5.6	144	6.8
3	81	3.8	90	4.3	155	7.3	97	4.6	134	6.4
4	46	2.2	56	2.7	117	5.5	88	4.2	72	3.4
5	52	2.5	62	2.9	73	3.5	75	3.6	74	3.5
No response	1403	66.5	1720	81.6	1508	71.5	1681	79.7	1489	70.6
Total	2109	100.0	2109	100.0	2109	100.0	2109	100.0	2109	100.0

Importance	Marketing		Use of social media		Charity Law/ governance		Safeguarding		Data protection	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1	65	3.1	42	2.0	83	3.9	28	1.3	15	0.7
2	91	4.3	75	3.6	80	3.8	43	2.0	39	1.8
3	68	3.2	87	4.1	103	4.9	64	3.0	63	3.0
4	94	4.5	100	4.7	115	5.5	93	4.4	69	3.3
5	64	3.0	74	3.5	106	5.0	86	4.1	122	5.8
No response	1727	81.9	1731	82.1	1622	76.9	1795	85.1	1801	85.4
Total	2109	100.0	2109	100.0	2109	100.0	2109	100.0	2109	100.0

Training and support

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of halls feeling they could benefit from training and advice, up from 19 per cent in 2009 to over two thirds of halls (68 per cent) in 2020. There were some minor differences, however, in response options in 2009.

Applying for funding is the main area where 20 per cent of responding halls indicated that their committee could benefit from training or support.

Seeking and receiving advice

H119. Has the hall sought advice in the last five years from the village hall/community building service provided by your local village hall adviser?

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Yes	835	48.7	55.3
No	469	27.3	42.5
Don't Know	216	12.6	*
Never heard of it	195	11.4	*
Total	**1715**	**100.0**	

Note: Difference response options were provided in 2020. In 2009, in addition to 'yes' and 'no' respondents could choose 'unsure'.

H120. If yes, please rate the service

	2020 Count	2020 %	2009 %
Excellent	453	51.0	37.8
Good	298	33.5	45.1
Adequate	74	8.3	11.5
Inadequate	11	1.2	3.7
Don't know	53	6.0	1.9
Total	**889**	**100.0**	**37.8**

84 per cent of those using this service in 2020 rated this as excellent or good.

Whilst nearly half (49 per cent) of respondent halls had sought advice from their local village hall adviser, one in ten had never heard of this service. 55 per cent of halls had sought the advice of a local village hall adviser in the previous 2009 survey, but some of this difference may be accounted for by variations in response options. Despite this, consistent levels of satisfaction are apparent over the two surveys, as 84 per cent of those using this service in 2020 rated this as 'excellent' or 'good', compared to 83 per cent in 2009. There was a marked decline in the proportion of halls viewing this service as 'inadequate' in 2020.

Interesting facts about halls

H121. Roughly how many cups of tea/coffee are served in your hall each week? And roughly how many packets of biscuits are consumed in your hall each week?

	Roughly how many cups of tea/coffee are served in your hall each week?		Roughly how many packets of biscuits are consumed in your hall each week?	
	Count	2020 %	Count	2020 %
1-10	322	21.5	1366	93.1
21-50	469	31.3	76	5.2
51-99	353	23.6	16	1.1
100 or more	353	23.6	9	0.6
Total	**1497**	**100.0**	**1467**	**100.0**

Halls fuel their local communities with huge quantities of tea and biscuits. A total of 90,000 cups of tea are served by respondent halls each week, and a further 70,000 packets of biscuits are opened.

In another sign of the importance of halls in the lives of local people, the survey sought information about the key 'life events' (such as christening parties, wedding celebrations and funeral receptions) that had taken place in halls in 2018. Over 13,000 such events were held throughout the year with, on average, nine taking place in each hall.

Finally, halls were asked about the age of the youngest and eldest member of their committees. On average, the youngest member was 46 years old, and the oldest 78 years old.

Halls fuel their local communities with huge quantities of tea and biscuits.

10. Conclusions

In this final section of the report the key findings from the survey are summarised. In addition, we explore in more detail some of the implications of the results for halls now, and in the coming ten years.

Village halls and their communities

The Survey obtained 2,109 unique responses from individual village and community halls. This represents approximately 21 per cent of all known village and community halls in England. Based on an estimated population of 10,000 village and community halls nationally, the calculated margin of error for a typical variable is ±0.8 per cent at the 95 per cent level. This means that 95 per cent of the time we would expect that the true value for responses to lie within a range of 0.8 per cent either side of the reported value.

Halls are rooted in their communities, with half of those surveyed serving areas with a population of less than 1,000. The extent of 'reach' beyond those communities was not something captured by this survey, but it is likely that the services and facilities offered determine the reach to users located outside the immediate vicinity of the hall. From 1998 to 2020 there appears to have been either a gradual decline in halls serving areas of 300 or less people, or a shift in response rates from those serving larger communities. This may perhaps reflect housing growth, although anecdotally the closure of some halls serving the smallest communities has taken place. It may also reflect poor internet or broadband in the smallest communities, as this was the first time this survey has been entirely online.

Halls provide an infrastructure through which valued and beneficial services are delivered.

Over 60 per cent of respondent halls stated that they were the only hall or similar meeting place in their village, a small increase from 2009. Wider evidence on the closure of churches, pubs and other public venues suggests a process of residualisation. Village and Community halls are, in some communities, the last venues/community assets left standing.

Three quarters of those surveyed identified themselves as a village or community hall. This represents a change from 2009. In 2020 respondents were more likely, for example, to classify their hall as a 'Memorial hall' or 'Community centre' than 'Village hall'. A slightly higher proportion of respondents in 2020 identified as a sports pavilion. The extent to which this represents a diversification of hall types, or simply differences in the sample compared to previous years, is unknown. The change to online surveying in 2020 is likely to have affected the sample.

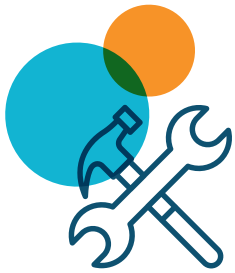
Halls provide an infrastructure through which valued and beneficial services are delivered. For instance, a significant number of halls (30 per cent of those surveyed) host some form of childcare provision.

Buildings

Halls continue to be an ageing stock with over 50 per cent of those surveyed being 80 years old or more, and results outlined below reflect the implications of this. Nonetheless, new development is taking place. The period 2010 – 2020 has led to around the same amount of new halls being developed as the preceding decade, 2000 – 2009. There are few signs that halls are being decommissioned in any great number. However, a small number of small villages are known to have lost them in the past decade and would have been unlikely to respond to this survey.

There are no signs of significant change in the facilities available at halls since 2009. However, problems with fabric continue to be reported: Over one third of responding halls reported problems with the condition of their roofs and/or gutters. Older halls (pre-1945) reported a higher number of problems in terms of satisfaction with, and condition of, different elements of the building. Flooring and external wall problems stand out as a particular issue for pre-1945 halls. Building condition has important connections with financial capacity as halls with smaller annual incomes were, overall, reporting more building-related problems.

A significant problem is that just over a third of respondent halls suggested that their car park is inadequate for their needs and/or in bad condition. This is likely to have important ramifications in terms of those who are prevented from accessing halls and how much revenue can be derived. This aspect of access is compounded by the reported decline in bus services, particularly at weekends.



Around half of respondent halls plan to undertake small scale renovations in the next five years, with 40 per cent planning major projects (for example, replacing roofing, flooring, kitchens or toilets). Older halls (i.e. those built pre–1945) were more likely to have major renovations planned to their hall. 16 per cent hope to carry out work costing more than £100,000 in the next five years and just under half plan to undertake work costing less than £20,000. The potential value of this work will be between £81m to £154m. Using this information to estimate the cost of such work over the next five years for all halls in England it appears likely to be between £384m to £730m. Such investment would deliver significant local economic benefits given that over 85 per cent plan to use local builders and suppliers for all or almost all of the work to be undertaken.

Around half of respondent halls plan to undertake small scale renovations in the next five years, with 40 per cent planning major projects (for example, replacing roofing, flooring, kitchens or toilets).

With low income levels for larger building improvement works external finance is required and over three-quarters of halls intend to apply for grants to fund improvement work. Much of this demand is likely to come in the near future as 72 per cent of the halls planning work are intending to apply within two years. In 2009 a higher proportion of grant applications were in the pipeline at the time of the survey (25 per cent), compared to 2020, when only 19% had applications in train. This suggests there is now a bigger unmet demand for grant funding for improvements ten years on.

Looking back at the previous five years, 70 per cent of respondents in 2020 had undertaken improvement work, built extensions or rebuilt part or all of their hall in the last five years. For over three quarters of halls the cost of this improvement work was less than £50,000. The Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund has set a minimum £50,000 threshold for applications, in order to target larger improvement projects which are considered harder to fund. But the analysis here suggests that only 22 per cent of halls carrying out work would have been eligible to apply. To maximise the extent of impact the Fund could consider lowering the cost threshold for applications and thereby assist more halls.

The precise aggregate cost of improvement work undertaken in the last five years is difficult to estimate, but it is likely to have been in the region of £46.6m to £97.6m, a significant investment. 26 per cent were able to meet the cost from their own funds, mainly for small works under £20,000.

Overall, the financial contribution of hall committees towards the cost of such work from fundraising and reserves had increased. Given that 91 per cent of halls are not VAT registered, this means the irrecoverable VAT from such work could be in the region of £9.3m to £19.5m, a significant burden for charities with modest incomes.

In 2020 it appears a greater proportion of funds were being directed to smaller scale improvements or specific changes, whereas ten years ago a greater proportion were carrying out major renovations. The poor condition of the hall and the need to upgrade toilet or kitchen facilities were cited by around half of respondents as reasons for the work undertaken, but funding availability may be reflected in this change, given the continued high level of demand indicated above.

The multiple economic, social and environmental benefits of continued investment in these buildings is evident from the results: Close to 30% undertook work to reduce the environmental impact of their hall, to meet health and safety requirements or to develop new facilities for new activities. 65% report this investment has improved use, and 72% of these report new activities now take place, 57% that more people can attend activities and 35% that infirm and disabled people can now attend activities. These benefits will doubtless have also contributed to improved financial sustainability for these halls.

However, halls have varying levels of success in securing grant aid for improvements. Respondent halls were much more likely to succeed in applications to parish councils than any other funder.

Certain charitable trusts continue to be key funders for village and community halls: The Garfield Weston Foundation, Local community Foundations and Bernard Sunley Foundation have funded 20 per cent – 40 per cent of those responding to this question.

While using the value of buildings to secure debt finance could in theory be an option for some halls wishing to undertake repairs and improvements in practice the low income levels, commonly under £10,000 p.a., limit the ability to repay large amounts of borrowing. Only 6 per cent of halls accessed loan finance in 2020 to undertake such work, down from 9 per cent in 2009.

In 2019 the £3 million Defra Village Halls Improvement Grant Fund was launched to assist halls with larger improvement projects costing over £50,000. A small proportion of respondents had applied successfully. The above results indicate that there is a continued need for this funding, with potential to deliver more in the way of social, economic and environmental benefits. Given the proportion of halls planning improvements costing less than £50,000, the threshold for applications could be reduced to benefit more halls.

Accessibility

Approximately 5 per cent more halls had undertaken access audits in 2020, compared to 2009, though the proportion still sits at just under half of the halls responding. Whilst 78 per cent of halls now identify as 'fully accessible', this is an increase of only 5 per cent since 2009. Around one in ten halls in 2020 said it was not feasible to make their hall fully accessible,

However, halls have varying levels of success in securing grant aid for improvements. Respondent halls were much more likely to succeed in applications to parish councils than any other funder.

which is an increase on 2009.

Furthermore, whilst respondents suggesting that their hall had 'access for wheelchair users throughout' was high (73 per cent), this represents a slight decline on 2009 when 77 per cent suggested this was the case. This is an important finding and suggests that more could still be done to improve accessibility for some users. Improving accessibility may have major financial implications if, for instance, halls look to widen doorways, install lifts etc. Around 16 per cent of halls planning to undertake major improvements in the next five years are targeting their facilities for disabled people. Whether the finance for this can be secured, only time will tell.

Environmental Impact

Community buildings have an important part to play in improving environmental sustainability, providing the opportunity to demonstrate renewable energy in action in a local, publicly accessible setting. Over the last 20 years there have been significant moves to reduce their environmental impact. However, there is still a long way to go.

Table D30 shows that the majority of halls have taken the most cost-effective and cheaper measures, such as monitoring energy use (65 per cent, a rise of 14 per cent), installing double glazing (65 per cent, with 6 per cent more now having double glazing), energy saving light bulbs (63 per cent) and installing more efficient heating controls (60 per cent, a rise of 10 per cent). Overall, 15 per cent more halls are implementing measures to reduce environmental impact in 2020 compared to 2009. For example, the proportion which have installed draught-proofing rose from 22% of respondents to 38 per cent.

Overall, 15 per cent more halls are implementing measures to reduce environmental impact in 2020 compared to 2009.

In 2009 Landfill Funds, the lottery Community Sustainable Energy Programme (CSEP) and government Low Carbon grants were potentially making an impact: 22 respondents had installed solar PV panels, 22 Air or Ground Source Heat Pumps or wood fired boilers and a further 43 received CSEP grants by the time the report was published. Those figures have risen dramatically: 275 now have solar PV panels, 172 either heat pumps or wood fired boilers, 8 per cent. While 6 per cent are planning to install renewable energy, 45 per cent had not considered installing solar panels and 54 per cent had not considered renewable heating. Building constraints clearly impact: Solid walls prevent over a fifth from installing cavity wall insulation, and 12 per cent cannot install solar PV panels.

Halls are increasingly adopting modern heating technologies. A significant reduction, 7 per cent, has been seen in the use of overhead heaters compared to 2009. A greater proportion are using air source heat pumps (increasing from 0.5 per cent in 2009 to 6 per cent in 2020) and ground source heat pumps, now installed in 2 per cent. These changes in heating and energy use will have had significant reductions in carbon emissions.

There are opportunities to invest in further carbon reduction when heating systems need replacement and building work is undertaken. 8% of respondent halls suggested their heating systems may fail in the next five years, after which time the CBI suggest new gas fired boilers should not be installed[18]. If this figure were grossed up to circa 10,000 village halls it would represent 800 village halls whose heating systems may

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[18] CBI (2020). Net Zero: The road to low-carbon heat. Accessed at: https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/5123/heat-policy-commission-final-report.pdf

fail in the next 5 years, an opportunity to at least double the number of halls with renewable heating systems, which government should seize when developing grants and incentives for energy efficiency and building improvements.

A key means of reducing carbon emissions is ensuring users can access them without using private cars, including by public transport. Evidence suggests that there has not been a reduction in halls served by bus routes, though a change in the cohort of response away from the smallest communities may mask that, but changes in the type of service may be affecting user access. In 2009 nearly 50 per cent of respondents stated their villages/towns had weekend services which enabled users to reach the hall. This compares with 37 per cent in 2020. Overall, nearly half the respondent halls stated they had seen the frequency of public transport to their community decline over the last five years, a very significant change in access.

Management and administration

Half of all respondent halls are run by a committee of user group appointees, elected and co-opted members. A significant minority (29 per cent) of halls are run by elected members and trustees, where there are no powers for user groups to appoint trustees. Furthermore 88 per cent of respondent halls are registered charities, a drop of 2 per cent from 2009. Some of these differences to 2009 may be explained by having a higher proportion of halls serving larger communities in 2020, and a higher proportion of certain hall types (e.g. sports pavilions).

Nearly 13 percent of halls registered with the Charity Commission have adopted the CIO model. This represents a significant take up of this new corporate structure introduced in the Charities Act 2011.

Nearly 13 per cent of respondent halls registered with the Charity Commission have adopted the CIO structure. This represents a significant increase from 2009 when the equivalent figure was 1.4 per cent. This reflects a significant take up of this new corporate structure introduced in the Charities Act 2011. Nonetheless, transfer of an unincorporated hall to CIO status is not a simple process. The associated costs have to be weighed against the perceived risk of personal liability for trustees and its effect on trustee recruitment. With this in mind, there are some constraints then on the adoption of this structure and the growth we might expect in future. For those halls not registered as a charity, the majority were managed by parish councils (53 per cent). Difficulties recruiting volunteers, and worries about trustee liability, may drive more halls toward sole trusteeship by parish councils.

Just over 60 per cent of respondent halls stated that they had a premises licence, with nearly 60 per cent able to sell alcohol. However, changes have taken place over the preceding ten years. In 2009 over 75 per cent of halls had a premises license. Relaxation of regulations in 2009 as part of the Government "red tape" initiative allowed committees (and not individuals) to hold the licenses, and deregulation in 2015 means that there is no longer a requirement for premises licenses for entertainment, only for the sale of alcohol. A higher proportion of halls would likely have had a premises license in 2009 owing to requirements under the Licensing Act 2003.

The proportion of respondent halls with written policies on key operational issues has increased since 2009, Nearly 10 per cent more halls have an equal opportunity policy in 2020. Halls with policies for protecting children have increased by 16 per cent as well as those with policies for protecting vulnerable adults (up by 32 per cent). It remains the case however, that less than half of the halls surveyed have these policies in place. Hence, there is room for improvement, highlighting continuing training need which may be addressed by the Lottery funded ACRE safeguarding project.

Halls mobilise significant volunteer support. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of halls have at least one volunteer booking secretary, and nearly two out of five have volunteer caretakers or handypersons. Research conducted in 2019 suggests volunteering opportunities within community owned assets was equivalent to £131,926,000 in wellbeing benefits. The vast majority of halls (94 per cent) require volunteers to carry out small repairs, routine maintenance and checks, with 53 per cent of halls using volunteers to carry out all but specialist maintenance work.

Many halls are also employing staff. We estimate this to be over 931 (44 per cent) of respondent halls. We estimate that the halls are employing at least 650 cleaners and 314 caretakers/handypersons in full and part-time roles. If similar levels of employment exist across all halls in England, then they are employing over 3000 cleaners and nearly 1500 caretakers/handypersons. This likely represents an important contribution to local economies. Research into community owned assets broadly suggests that full-time equivalent jobs in this sector provide £15.8m in fiscal benefit saving per annum and £966,000 in public value benefit due to better health per annum. Village halls also provide an important infrastructure for people and small businesses to earn a living. From the respondent halls, at least 10,000 individuals are utilising their halls for this purpose, indicating that around 50,000 people may be doing so within all halls in England.

Over 44 percent are employing at least 650 cleaners and 314 caretakers/handypersons in full and part time roles.

Difficulty recruiting new committee members is the major issue most halls face regularly. Half all respondent halls were regularly grappling with this problem, a rise from 2009, and a further 30 per cent faced this issue occasionally. The lack of financial support was another key problem, faced regularly or occasionally by 45 per cent of halls.

Just over two in five respondent halls (43 per cent) have successfully developed new activities and/or services in response to local need, and a further one in five (21 per cent) indicated that they have endeavoured to do so but have so far been unsuccessful. The main barrier cited by respondent halls to developing new services and activities in response to local need and for marginalised individuals or groups was the limited capacity of volunteer committee members, followed by the inability to recruit new volunteers to run such activities.

Hall finances

Nearly 60 per cent of respondent halls reported that their running costs totalled less than £10,000 per annum over the last two years. When accounting for inflation, the proportion of halls running on low-cost bases is roughly the same in 2020 as 2009. In 2009, 75 per cent of halls had running costs under £10,000. In 2020 75 per cent had costs under £15,000 per annum, and hence in line with inflation from 2008.

There has been a general improvement in financial health among respondents, but also greater polarisation; around 50 per cent of respondent halls reported a small or healthy surplus made by hire charges and rental income. This compares favourably with 2009 when 46 per cent made some form of surplus. In 2009, 59 per cent of halls met 75 per cent or more of their costs with hire charges, and this compares favourably to 2020 when the equivalent proportion was 63 per cent. This suggests that, ten years on, a greater proportion of halls are able to use hire charges to meet the majority of their costs. In this context it is surprising that only 59 per cent of halls review charges annually, with a further 40 per cent only reviewing such charges every 3-5 years or less. In order to adjust for inflating costs, this may be an area for future support and improvement.

Halls are deriving significant revenue from hire charges, fundraising, donations, trading and/or contracts and renting out part of property for private or commercial use. Each of these income streams is providing the halls with over £1m in revenue (when all halls are aggregated). By far the largest of these income sources is hire charges, with respondents receiving over £19m in such fees, equivalent to £12,000 per hall. This is potentially £120 million per annum if grossed up to cover all village and community halls in rural England .

Evidence suggests that halls are improving their financial planning, with more preparing budgets and repair and maintenance programmes. This may reflect the increased information, training, advice and peer support available via Network Advisers. Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of respondent hall committees believe that their hall will remain financially viable over the next 5 years, marginally up on results from 2009. Local authorities can assist halls financially by offering up to 100 per cent discretionary rate relief. In 2009, 72 per cent of halls received the full 100 per cent reduction, but in 2020 the equivalent figure was 62 per cent. Around 5 per cent less halls are receiving the mandatory 80 per cent relief rate. Significant geographical variation underpins these patterns. Local authorities who insist on an annual review of rate relief can reduce their own bureaucracy, and the impact on halls and their staff/volunteers, by moving to 3 or 5 year reviews. The case for this can be made from these survey results which show remarkable consistency in the financing of village halls.

Respondents were asked to state the value their buildings were insured for in the event of needing to be rebuilt. 47 per cent of halls are valued less than £500,000. Using certain assumptions we estimate that the total value of respondent halls is between £1-1.5bn in 2020. When this is used to gross-up all village halls in England, we estimate their value at between £5.2-£8.9bn.

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Use of halls

Various patterns have emerged in terms of the use of halls, and how demand for certain facilities and services might be changing. Use of halls for private parties have been common activities, and demand for this use is increasing. Similarly, pre-school education is a prominent use, and this is an activity increasingly taking place in halls. This may relate to the extension of services where they already existed - perhaps owing to free childcare entitlement - rather than new provision in halls. Certain growth areas are apparent, for instance, in the use of halls for children's dance classes and fitness classes, the latter viewed as a growing use by 50 per cent of respondents and continuing the trend in growth from 2009. Nearly

three quarters of the respondent halls are used for coffee mornings and afternoon teas, with 25 per cent of those responding seeing increases in this activity and further increases in community cafés and luncheon clubs reflecting growth in activity which address loneliness and isolation. The most common new use of halls in terms of ‘services, social enterprises and wellbeing’ was as an emergency response facility and although halls were in the main closed during COVID-19, some were used for testing and some remained open to provide essential services such as food or drug distribution or for pre-school for children of essential workers.

Over 60 percent of halls reported that up to 25 per cent of their local residents used their hall regularly but there appears to be a greater proportion of residents now using some halls. Comparing the 2009 and 2020 data highlights increase in the proportion of halls used by 26-50 and 51-75 per cent of the local population.

Halls are clearly seeking to meet the needs of the local community and other users. However, more than a quarter of halls found it difficult to do this. The most common difficulties faced included lack of storage and parking, a lack of internet, and limited meeting space.

The survey suggests that regular use by certain groups has decreased marginally since 2009. 42 per cent of disabled/infirm users did so regularly whilst in 2020 this has decreased to 38 per cent. For regular BAME users 10 per cent did so regularly, down from 20 per cent in 2009. This is an issue that warrants further study to ensure that halls remain inclusive.

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Working with others

Approximately 7 per cent of halls were supporting the use of their space by statutory services and other bodies, for such activities as health checks and appointments, as well as diabetes clinics, blood donor sessions, flu jabs and mental health sessions. This usage by statutory or related bodies is, however, down by around 4 per cent on 2009. Our analysis of hall usage suggests that some halls have experienced a decline in use for doctor’s surgeries and baby clinics, though this was only a small number of respondents. Nonetheless this is a worrying trend which could worsen access to crucial services, particularly with the evidence on changes in public transport indicated by the survey.

Nearly one in ten halls are used as a venue for community businesses, who in turn support the halls through hiring out space and other financial contributions. Evidence on the organisations hosted by halls suggests many may be providing invaluable local services. We know that over 11 per cent of halls host café’s and nurseries, with a further 7 per cent hosting a local post office, and 2 per cent hosting a shop. Halls provide important infrastructure for certain community businesses to function.

There has been a marked increase in the proportion of halls feeling they could benefit from training and advice. In 2020 68 per cent of halls stated this, which is significantly more than in 2009. Applying for funding is the main area where committees felt they could benefit from training or support.

There was a marginal drop in the percentage of halls seeking advice from local village hall advisers, when compared to 2009. However, similar levels of satisfaction were seen across the two surveys, with a decrease in those deeming the service ‘inadequate’ in 2020, suggesting some service improvements have taken place.

The English Village and Community Hall Survey 2020

Written on behalf of:

Action with Communities in Rural England

ACRE is the national voice for the 38 ACRE Network members who make up the country's largest rural network. Together we reach 25,000 grassroots organisations in 11,000 rural communities

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