COMMUNITY HUB TOOLKIT

A beginner's guide to setting up a Community Hub project and developing your village hall or community centre

Contents:

YOUR WAKE UP CALL

WHEN TO START THINKING ABOUT A COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT:
When someone says "We can't let our community die" it's time to act. A shared problem or threat which unites residents can act as a powerful stimulus for bringing people together to improve local services.

Services under threat:
Your first instinct may be to start a campaign to oppose the changes if you are faced with a school closure, losing the village shop or post office, or the reorganisation of local health or social care facilities. But what if you lose?

Community Hub project can be a crucial opportunity for local people to take control and begin to restore activities and services for themselves.

Redundant or derelict buildings:
> A Community Hub project might restore community life to a redundant school building or a disused health centre church, or an empty factory.
> It can turn a derelict eyesore into an asset and help local people feel more confident about the future.

A failing community centre
Is the roof leaking? Is the Committee running out of steam. Are activities declining? It may be time for a rethink about how your village hall is managed and used – and what other more useful facilities it could provide.

We just need to do more
There's no need to wait for a crisis to start planning for a Community Hub in an existing village hall or community centre. You may just recognise that there are social, personal and economic problems which aren't being adequately dealt with by government, and that residents could work together to make a difference.

It's time for the community to get to work!

What is a Community Hub?
"A Community Hub is a multi-use, community-run and led building, which is proactive in enabling a range of services to improve the quality of life for the whole community"

What type of activities?
There's virtually no limit to the activities you can provide in your Community Hub. It very much depends on the services which local people need and want to use, and how much you are prepared to work together to get them set up and supported.

To attract some services you may need to win the confidence of public sector organisations, and work in partnership with local authority departments, health bodies, the Royal Mail, the police etc.

Here are some of the facilities which Community Hubs provide in other parts of the country:

> Multi-purpose community centres
> Post Office services
> Community meeting spaces
> Child care
> Baby health clinics
> Family support services
> Youth services
> Activities for older people
> Health clinics – such as chiropody
> Activities for people with disabilities
> Sports and recreation
> Office space for local community organisations

Community cafes
Furniture and white goods recycling
Lunch clubs for the elderly
Play and sports facilities

Starting out, expanding or trying to survive?
You may be starting out to set up a community centre for the first time, planning to expand an existing one, or trying to find ways to keep an existing centre which is struggling.
Many of the issues are the same for creating any successful community centre or village hall.

YOUR FIRST COMMUNITY MEETING

When there's a need to act you should start by bringing people together.

Preparations:

Make the meeting "official" if you can – get your community council or ward councillor to call or host it.

Have a clear focus – one or two buildings or issues, not an opportunity to whinge about anything.

Don't be afraid to be dramatic - "Save the Village Hall" is better than "We must elect a new committee."

Choose a suitable venue – somewhere accessible, and well known, ideally a building you're trying to save (provided it's safe).

Advertise the meeting widely and use several different approaches – posters, leaflets, newspaper announcements, emails to local groups etc.

Have a clear idea of what you want to come out of the meeting.

Invite your opponents too – shutting them out only gives them ammunition against you.

Holding the meeting:

Arrange a chair in advance – someone who can command authority and manage the debate

Take a record of who attends – names , addresses, email

Arrange to take notes of suggestions and decisions made

Explore the issues, and encourage suggestions for possible courses of action. But don't try to achieve too much

Keep the discussion positive, up-beat and *realistic*

Aim to establish common ground

Keep an eye on what you'll do next – invariably this is to *set up a Steering Group* to make progress and report back firm recommendations to a future community meeting

Why involve everyone?

People and individual organisations acting alone won't have the credibility or clout of action which is supported by the whole community.

A STEERING GROUP TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN

Forming a steering group is a critical step, unless there is already a fully representative and active committee to do so. (If an effective group already existed a community meeting probably wouldn't have been necessary).

The Steering Group's brief

Keep it clear and simple – eg "to investigate the possibility of a Community Hub project at XXX building aimed at meeting the needs of the community"

The Group's role is usually to

> reflect the general wishes of the community meeting as far as possible
>
> explore ideas, carry out enquiries, gather information, consult with groups elsewhere which have tackled similar problems
>
> contact outside agencies for advice or practical support
>
> come up with realistic and practical proposals for action
>
> recommend, not to decide
>
> evolve a more permanent role; this may or may not eventually become the group which runs new facilities and activities – you shouldn't decide this now.

Who should be on the Steering Group?

The meeting will provide the first members. But give the group power to recruit other useful members. Aim for a varied membership of 6 to 12 including:

> people with a variety of skills from different backgrounds
>
> members of local organisations (but not their formally appointed "representatives", because than can complicate your objectives)
>
> activists who are campaigning for new services, and potential users of those services
>
> ideally people with useful knowledge – such as building work, business management, finance and fundraising, voluntary work
>
> a councillor or two (but unless you really want a council-run project rather than a community venture, they should be in a minority).

Be clear about the goal

The Steering Group should agree what it is aiming to do. It might seem obvious – but you can't be sure you all want the same thing unless you discuss it.

The Steering Group's proposals:

The outcomes will differ in every case of course. But here are some of the recommendations to the community you might expect:

> "There is a need to provide services, including..."
>
> "The type of organisation we need is..."
>
> "The best building to achieve our aims is..."
>
> "We should employ professionals to do more research/recommend the best options/evaluate whether our ideas are viable."

A QUICK AND EASY FIRST CONSTITUTION

You'll quickly find that your new group needs a constitution to give it basic operating rules and credibility with your community and with potential supporters in outside bodies.

Just keep it simple:

To start with you just need to set up a no-frills community association.

Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations can provide a simple model constitution for an "unincorporated association", and they can explain how it works – www.-pavo.org.uk.

Don't agonise over whether you need to be a charity or a limited company. That debate can come later.

Decisions you have to take

Even so, you will need to adapt the model to suit your needs. Key issues to decide will include:

how will you describe your organisation's objectives?

what geographical area will it cover?

how many people will you have on your committee and how will they be elected or appointed?

will your organisation have a community membership? (this is strongly recommended to give it local credibility)

if so, how will they be able to join?

Traps to avoid

Avoid lengthy discussions which go on for several meetings. Your Committee may get bored, and you could lose members who joined to do something practical.

Don't adopt a constitution which is difficult to change. A successful project will need to upgrade its constitution or create an entirely new organisation in the next two or three years. At this stage a new group should just keep it simple.

FIND OUT WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to assume you know what local people want or need in their community hub. You must ask them properly.

Why consult?

A thorough consultation process is a vital step towards planning a project which will:

> meets the community's needs
>
> be used
>
> have any chance of becoming sustainable
>
> generate local interest and support
>
> attract volunteers and new committee members
>
> provide evidence for funders that their grants will have an effect.

What do you need to find out – and where from?

> **community meetings tell** you whether there's interest in and support for your projects
>
> **local surveys** tell you what people want
>
> **statistical research** using Census and other figures may show you what social, economic, health and environmental issues you should be tackling
>
> **talking to experts** in local authorities, health bodies, voluntary sector agencies etc can tell you what action is needed.
>
> **talking to residents** tells you what services they are likely to use.

How should you do your survey?

> Well-organised community groups can achieve a great deal using consultation and planning toolkits.
>
> If you design your own questionnaires try not to ask leading questions which are bound to get the answers which *you* want.
>
> Make surveys thorough – you've probably only got one shot at it.
>
> But don't make them too long – 4 sides of A4 maximum.
>
> Don't forget questions which collect information about the respondents – their age, gender, employment status, the neighbourhood where they live. (But if you save personal information on computer which identifies individuals you may need to register under the Data Protection Act – see details at www.ico.org.uk)
>
> Use questionnaires to appeal for volunteers and to build up email contact lists.
>
> A small prize can be useful incentive for attracting questionnaire responses.

Who can help?

> Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (www.pavo.org.uk) can provide advice on carrying out local consultations.
>
> Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development (PLANED) produce factsheets on action planning, and case studies on Community Hubs in the county. These may be a useful source of information.
>
> ACRE (www.acre.org.uk) and its Rural Community Action Network serves members in England, but other organisations can access some of its information services, including publications and case studies.
>
> Funding can often be secured to employ professional consultants to carry out comprehensive community consultations and business plans. Email Powys County Council Community Regeneration at liz.trow@powys.gov.uk.
>
> If you use consultants prepare a clear brief in advance to explain what you want done, and insist on working closely with them so your Committee can remains in control.

STARTING TO PLAN

Why planning comes first

It may seem that the most important thing is to raise funds to set up your project. But what you are more likely to need is funds to employ professionals to help with your planning – architects and structural engineers for buildings, and researchers to find out what your community needs.

You must start by producing sound plans which will work in practice and which will convince hard-pressed funding organisations to part with their money. And even before you actually start to produce a Business Plan to support your grant applications, your group should get together to clarify

what you intend to achieve

why you need to do it, and

how you aim to do it in practice.

Don't forget, planning is not secondary to fundraising – it's the activity which tells funders whether they should support your project.

The benefits of good planning

Poorly organised planning can leave you with a Business Plan which no one understands and which is irrelevant to your project. You should try to set up a well-managed process which makes the planning experience itself worthwhile. This means aiming to:

encourage group members to review the organisation's long and short term objectives and share aspirations with one another

foster teamwork among members of your group

test the prospects for viability of your plans with hard financial details

highlight future dangers and show up flaws in your approach

understand your proposed developments and activities in detail – including the facilities you will provide and the practical day-to-day management and financial controls

identify new possibilities and build flexibility into your activities

clarify the way you will manage and staff your activities

provide the means to monitor actual progress

highlight your weaknesses so that you can deal with them

highlight strengths and skills so you can exploit them fully.

Some tips for effective planning

start with a simple "brain-storming" exercise

list possibilities and options on a flip chart

don't discuss ideas in detail and don't rule anything out at this stage

work together as a team

encourage everyone to contribute

don't allow one person's vision to dominate

don't assume you all agree

spend time discussing your group's basic objectives

check what each member wants your organisation and your project to achieve

if there are differences of opinion try to reconcile them; don't fudge issues of principle or strong convictions which could cause disagreements later

test the financial implications with broad-brush expenditure and income guestimates

are you on the right track, or do you need to do things differently?

refine the financial estimates gradually as you work out more detail

once you know generally what you want, set up a subgroup to work out the details

this allows the main meetings to be more varied and interesting and takes the pressure off people who prefer action to planning or talking

give the subgroup a clear brief

ask them to report back regularly to keep everyone else informed

don't plan to do everything at once

set priorities to make individual targets more achievable

consider setting short, medium and long term objectives to help visual how things may develop

work out how you will produce the written Business Plan –

can you raise money for a paid professional?

do members of the group have the skills and/or time to do it? ss training needed?

is it realistic to share the writing work itself among members? (it rarely is), and if it is, who will co-ordinate all the parts?

FEASIBILITY AND BUSINESS PLANS

Feasibility studies and business plans are your opportunity to turn your ideas and ambitions into practical plans which will work and be financially sustainable in the real world.

What your plan needs to show

Your Business Plan should be a document which:

provides evidence of the community, social, economic, environmental and/or cultural needs which your project intends to tackle

shows what changes you will achieve

shows *how* the organisation will respond – the activities which will be carried out and how they will be managed

shows that this response will be "viable" – ie, that it can be achieved practically and within the financial and physical resources which will be available

shows where those resource will come from.

Your planning approach

Keep it real: The plan is not an idealised picture of what you would like to happen, as some people seem to think. It has to be a reasoned case with evidence of how they will happen.

A tool for thinking as well as doing: You can't prepare a good plan without some hard thinking to answer fundamental questions about what you are doing – "what?", "why?", "how?", "how much?" and "what if?".

Manage outside consultants effectively: If you employ a consultant you will still have plenty of work to do – you will need:

a clear brief to say what you want done

realistic and agreed targets and deadlines for the consultant's work

regular meetings with the consultant so the group can be involved in (and take ownership of) the planning process

arrangements for overseeing the consultant's progress

Cover everything: Your plan does not need to be a long document. But it does need to show that you have understood all the relevant issues. Make sure you can say something in respond to the questions in the Business Plan Checklist.

Why planning to raise money is bad:

Business plans are often written for the sole purpose of raising money, and the process recommended in the Starting to plan section is ignored altogether. The temptation to exaggerate is often irresistible, and the resulting plans are usually poor and often worthless.

If you write your business plan for someone else it becomes "the funder's plan" – ie what you think the funder wants to hear, not what you need to be saying.

If your plan is a work of fiction with unreliable targets and financial projections it will be worthless for monitoring your project's progress – and will actually increase the risk of failure.

Most funders can see through a fictitious plan – so you will lose their confidence, and possibly ruin the chances of funding for a good project.

Even if nothing bad happens you will still have wasted your time producing a bad plan when the same effort could have produced real benefits for your organisation.

THE BUSINESS PLANNING CHECKLIST

What you need to include:
This model outline for a community project's business plan provides an extensive checklist of items which you might need to include. Make sure you cover all the topics relevant to your organisation and project.

A planning checklist:
You can also use this outline as a checklist for the planning and decision-making you carry out before writing the Business Plan itself.

1. A cover: Include your name and logo, the name of the funder it is addressed to, and the date. Indicate whether this is a draft, and number different drafts sequentially. It's easy to get confused with different versions of your plan.

2. Introduction: The Introduction should include:
> a brief outline of the project or development
> an outline of the total funding required, if the plan is accompanying a grant application, plus the prospective sources, and an explicit statement of the amount of grant being applied for from the funder)

3. Background: Describe:
> what does your organisation do? what is the project you are planning?
> what are your organisation's objectives (or charitable objects)?
> how did your organisation start and develop
> what are your existing and proposed constitutional arrangements

4. Personnel:
> who are the trustees (committee members), what are their roles, and briefly what is their personal background (eg employment and outside interests)?
> who are the key individuals – chair, chief executive, other key staff (whether already in post or proposed) – you can include job descriptions in an appendix

5. The development proposal:
> describe the services which you want to provide or develop
> explain how they will operate and why you chose to run them in this specific way;
> describe any specialist equipment, processes or approaches which are unlikely to be familiar to people outside your organisation
> what are the targets for this year of operation?
> describe any special legal and licensing requirements you will be required to meet
> what are the potential problems with this project and how will you overcome them?
> who will actually provide the service? where? when?
> what are the targets for the first year of the new operation?

6. The need or "market":
> who are the current and proposed users/clients of your proposed activities or service? how many people do you plan to provide for? how many extra will this be?
> how did you go about identifying and evaluating this need, ie any market research you have carried out and a summary of the results? (present the full results in an appendix)
> what underlying evidence of need is there? (eg census and other statistics and anecdotes drawn from your experience)
> are there any special characteristics which you have identified?
> who else is providing this type of service? how is yours unique or better? how will you avoid duplication and damaging competition?

7. Promotion and publicity

which groups or people/organisations need to know about your service or activities
how will you let each group of potential users and clients know about your service?
how will you prioritise the promotions work?
how much will promotion work cost, and how will it be paid for?
who will be responsible? how will your web site be kept up to date

8. Charges:

how have you fixed your proposed charges, if any
how do they compare with similar services available in your area or elsewhere?
include any detailed calculations in an appendix, and refer to them here.

9. Staffing and volunteering:

what paid posts will you create to provide the service? what skills are required?
are there any significant recruitment issues such as salary levels or availability of skills
what facilities and training will be provided for staff and volunteers?
how and by whom will volunteers be recruited, inducted and supervised?
is there a code of practice for volunteering?

10. Management:

who will make overall policy; who will take day to day decisions; who will be consulted?
how will decisions be recorded and communicated and their implementation monitored, and who is ultimately responsible?
how will the paid manager and staff work effectively with the trustees?
how will the financial arrangements be managed, supervised and monitored
where appropriate, include a chart to show how the management structure fits together.

11. Planning and premises and equipment:

what premises will you be using? how will the space be used by your project?
who owns the premises or land? what are the terms and cost of the tenancy/purchase?
how suitable are the premises for your needs? do you need to carry out any renovation work or adaptations?
what professional help/advice have you had? what plans have been drawn up? do you need planning and building control permissions?

12. Training and support:

what help have you had to develop the capacity of your group, your project ideas and your management skills?
what continuing training will be needed for board members? for paid staff? for volunteers?
what plans and resources are there for delivering this training?

13. Targeting, monitoring and evaluation:

define all the groups of people who receive benefit from your activities, directly or indirectly (eg service users and clients, volunteers)
in what specific ways will these groups benefit?
how will you record and measure whether you are achieving these benefits? will you be able to show the changes which your activities or service is creating?

14. Accountability:

how will the public know about your work?
how will you involve the community in the project or organisation?
how will clients and users be involved in the planning, delivery or monitoring of the service?

15. Cash flow forecast:
Include a cash flow forecast for at least the forthcoming three years
16. **Analysis of the financial arrangements:**
Describe the financial implications of your proposals in detail by referring separately to the items under the income and expenditure headings in your cash flow forecast.
> explain how your figures were arrived at
> describe the sources of funding which you hope to secure
> assess the overall cash flow situation for the period of the forecast
> explain what action would be taken if you miss your income targets or overspend
> indicate how the project or service will be sustained in the longer term.

17. Project timetable:
> provide a timetable to show the key stages in achieving each of your main objectives, both while the project is being developed and when it is running
> explain the method you will use to monitor your progress against the timetable.

18. Strengths and weaknesses:
> identify the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation and project ideas to show that you have properly evaluated your capacity to develop the project
> show how you will take steps to remove the weaknesses you have identified or what steps you will take to minimise their impact.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

– PLANNING, LEASES AND LICENSES

If you want to lease an existing building:

You probably need to find a solicitor to represent you and advise on the terms. This could be a volunteer from a local law firm who is prepared to advise on the terms of the lease for nothing or a reduced fee.

Do you have the option of short term rent or "license"?

> The legal situation is simpler than with a lease. But you should still get legal advice on the terms of the licence
>
> You may like the idea of a short-term commitment. But you will have less security as a tenant.
>
> What out for issues such as responsibilities for repairs and periodic rent rises.

Do you want to buy your building or take over ownership?

> Many of the most successful community organisations own and run their own buildings. **The possibility of owning a building is always worth considering carefully.**
>
>> The asset can give them independence, confidence and pride. It can be used to create rental income.
>>
>> It can provide flexibility and freedom for growth and exciting new ventures.
>
> The building's condition and the likely costs of long-term maintenance will be critical to your organisation's sustainability. Do your sums carefully.
>
> The owners may make a generous offer to donate the building to the community. But check they are not unloading a costly liability, and weigh up the benefits.
>
> Does the building which interests you have listed status? Check at the outset. If so, explore the implications carefully with the local authority.A listed building can be a millstone.
>
> If you are taking over ownership of property assets you definitely need to find a solicitor to represent you.
>
> Don't expect fast progress – with older buildings there can be historical ownership issues, covenants, access and other permissions and planning matters to resolve.
>
> Make sure you have money available to cover solicitors' bills and planning fees. You may incur costs even if the project doesn't go ahead.

If you want to renovate a building:

If you are planning to renovate an old building and adapt it to the needs of your project you will need professional guidance through several successive planning stages. See "Planning" in the "Where to find more help" section for contact information.

> **Is the building suitable for your project or activity?**
>
>> You may need a structural survey to assess its condition and estimate the cost of making it usable.
>>
>> You may need an architect's preliminary assessment to recommend whether it can be adapted cost-effectively.
>
> **Does it contain asbestos?** If so you will need a survey to identify the location and the degree of risk. Subsequent plans must take these results into consideration.
>
> **Is this a listed building?** If there is any possibility at all that the premises have listed building status you are strongly advised to contact the Powys County Council Built Heritage and Conservation Office for advice as early as possible. There may be constraints on what you can do.

Is the building in the Brecon Beacons National Park? Planning controls are stricter here than elsewhere. Contact the Park at an early stage to establish what might be involved.

What changes do you want to make to the building?

> You will need an architect to prepare plans for any significant alterations, draw up plans, and provide estimated project costs with the help of a quantity surveyor.
>
> You may have no choice about the provisions you make for facilities and access for people with disabilities.
>
> Specialist advice may be needed on energy conservation and alternative power issues.

What approvals do you need? Contact the planning department and building control sections of the Council (and the National Park if appropriate) to check requirements.

Other regulations affecting contractors and building work: Your architect should be able to advise on action on many other issues including fire safety, the electricity supply, parking and the contractor's responsibilities.

Contracting: This complex issue depends on the size of the project, and professional advice will be needed. But community groups should try to avoid taking a back seat and losing control of their developments.

If you want to a new building:

Sometimes it is cheaper and more efficient to construct a new building (VAT-free) rather than renovate an old one. Some of the planning steps are the same, but funding sources and planning options may be more limited. Consult an architect.

STARTING TO FUNDRAISE

Fundraising is a complicated, demanding and sometimes highly competitive activity. **You should aim to draw up (and keep updating) a simple "Fundraising Plan" to make the job of raising money manageable.**

What types of fundraising?

Grant funding by public and charitable bodies is usually essential for major projects involving buildings. But there are plenty of other approaches to consider – including fundraising shows, appeals, car boot sales and sales of work, sponsorship, street collections, raffles, employing paid fundraisers, even full-scale trading activities and selling shares.

Issues to consider

You should take into account:

the benefits of demonstrating to grant-making bodies that you are resourceful and effective enough to raise money yourselves

the additional publicity benefits of local events and appeals

the likely costs - don't forget that fundraising events such as entertainments and promotions may cost you more than you earn

well-organised fundraising events can be great for getting people to work together, but the benefits disappear if the hard work doesn't produce a worthwhile income

the legal implications (eg restrictions on raffles, street collections, employing fundraisers etc).

What a Fundraising Plan might look like

A plan can help you prioritise your activities, meet grant application deadlines, share the burden with group members, and keep track of progress. A Fundraising Plan can cover:

what you need money for – start up costs, renovation work, equipment, running costs

what types of fundraising you will do

the organisations you will approach for grants

a timetable with targets (including activities, events and application deadlines) to keep you on track

how much you are prepared to spend

individual tasks and who will be responsible for what

the way you'll record the outcomes of what you do for future reference

the contribution which grants and fundraising will make to the long-term sustainability of your organisation and its work.

Basic tips about applying for grants:

Don't start fundraising too soon. Get your plans in place first. Show you can raise money in other ways if possible.

Powys County Council Community Regeneration and PAVO (www.pavo.org.uk) can direct you to sources of small sums of start-up cash – perhaps to enable you to run community events to build up interest, and pay for stationery and publicity.

Bigger grants will need a lot more work if you are going to be successful. Identify targets well in advance and plan applications carefully.

Every funder has their own targets, priorities and application criteria. You **must** study these and frame your bids accordingly.

Application forms are the funders' means of evaluating your proposal, not your opportunity to say whatever you like. **Make sure you understand the questions. Answer them clearly and specifically.** Keep other details for the "any other information" section.

Don't submit a major grant application (ie tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds) without a project plan or business plan. This is evidence that you have done your homework, *even if you are not asked to submit one*.

Fundraising is largely a matter of experience – the more you do it the better you will get. So it's good if there is a group member who can specialise in preparing applications.

But don't leave one person to do all the work alone. There are plenty of jobs which other members can help with which can provide crucial information to support applications, such as:

      liaising with architects

      consulting residents, visiting other similar projects

      collecting press cuttings or taking photographs to support applications

      gathering information about costings, setting charges

      preparing policy documents, job descriptions, a promotions plan where required by the funder

      writing pen pictures of Committee members

      checking and proof reading.

AIMING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Any public or charitable body thinking of supporting your Community Hub project is likely to want to know that it will still be active in five or ten years time – ie that it is "sustainable". You should too. There is no alternative to planning for the long term right from the start.

What does sustainability mean?

"Sustainability" is a much abused terms which is defined differently depending who's using it.

> You will be expected to be **environmentally sustainable**, to minimise any adverse impacts your work has on the environment
>
> You will probably be facing the challenges of rebuilding or retaining a **sustainable community** against the damage caused by the loss of local services, economic hardship and outward migration.
>
> Some members of the business community may dismiss the efforts of your Community Hub because you do not earn enough to become **economically viable** (forgetting the difference that volunteering, community effort and charity can make). But if you can't become financially sustainable in a reasonable space of time all your project will fail and your efforts will be wasted. **This very simply means you must raise enough money wherever you can to meet your expenses and keep some in reserve for emergencies.**

Finding money wherever you can

A successful multi-purpose community centre will be committed to raising income from any source at all (provided it's legal and moral of course). The range of possibilities – which can add greatly to the diversity and interest of your project as well as the security of your finances – include:

> **room hire for events** – perhaps you can also increase bookings by exploiting your special rural or central location to attract outside users
>
> conventional local fundraising – charity shows, fares, sponsored events etc
>
> core grants to fund wages, administration or other overheads (these are hard to come by and even harder to get repeated, so it's best not to depend on them)
>
> management fees, rents or equipment and other overhead costs – always include sums fort these core costs when applying for grants for new project activities
>
> grant-funded volunteering projects – use these to get more done for less
>
> renting space in your building – this is almost always the quickest route to financial security
>
> training events and courses – become a regular training venue; maximise income where you can by organising, advertising and delivering your own courses
>
> community trading ventures – cafes, community shops etc – they won't usually make a profit but they will contribute to the cost of overheads and attract people to your building to use other services
>
> contracts to deliver services – established community organisations can sometimes help public bodies and charities to meet local needs (eg for elderly, young, unemployed or disabled people) by providing premises, information and staff in the right places
>
> selling your expertise – advise others about the things you've become good at – and charge a consultancy fee
>
> selling shares in your enterprise – this is technically complex, but potentially valuable for some projects
>
> owning your own building – a huge potential advantage providing flexibility and earning potential as long as your building really is an asset and not a high-maintenance liability.

Colocation – sharing your premises:

An important, though far from guaranteed route to sustainability is to share your community building with services provided by public sector organisations. Possible partners include your local council, the health board, the police or the Post Office – any organisation which is looking for ways to fill gaps in local services cost effectively and in locations which will be popular with the public.

You may be able to offer accommodation to a new facility where other suitable buildings are not available, or to attract agencies to establish part-time outposts in the community for services which have been lost as a result of cutbacks.

Possibilities include clinics and health activity groups such as leg clubs, part time police stations, public libraries and drop-in advice desks.

It is important that you can provide evidence of community need and that any facilities provided will be adequately used. And be prepared to work hard to persuade the target bodies to respond to your enticements.

Are you going to trade?

Community or social enterprise offer exciting opportunities for growth and long-term sustainability for community hub projects.

It is largely beyond the scope of this Toolkit. But PAVO (www.pavo.org.uk) and the Wales Co-operative Centre (www.walescooperative.org.uk) can provide help and information. Newcomers should study the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's comprehensive online guide "It's an idea. But is it a Business? – A Guide to Third Sector Trading" at www.wc-va.org.uk.

FINDING THE RIGHT LEGAL STRUCTURE

– COMPANIES, ASSOCIATIONS AND CHARITIES

Legal structures for charities and community organisations have become more complicated for groups in recent years with the reforms to charity law and (very modest) government help for social enterprises including community-owned trading ventures. **Some people find the term "legal structures" itself rather worrying. But that's unnecessary. Some reassurance to simplify matters:**

> Forget about charities for a moment. They don't affect the main options.
>
> **You already have legal responsibilities** if you are working with other people as a community or voluntary group.
>
> > Getting formally constituted does not expose you to greater risk – it helps you to manage your responsibilities better.
> >
> > "Management committee members", and "Board members", "Directors" etc are all technically "trustees" who are responsible for their organisations. The term "custodian trustee" used in some charities is a different specialist role.
>
> **There are really only two types of organisation:**
>
> > **Unincorporated associations** (most community organisations) start as groups of individuals rather than limited companies. As a committee member you are personally responsible, with the other members, for what your organisation does, whether or not you have a written constitution.
> >
> > **Incorporated organisations (including all types of limited company)** have their own separate legal identity. As a director or committee member you are responsible for running it properly, and, provided you do, your liability for the company's debts in the event of failure will be limited to a nominal sum (often £1).
>
> **Industrial and Provident Societies** are a less flexible form of legal structure which tend to be favoured by co-operative organisations. They are not recommended for Community Hub projects.
>
> **Names you can ignore:** Many commonly used terms have no legal meaning at all, and are only useful for helping to bracket together different times of activity - eg "not-for-profit company", "community partnership", "social enterprise", "community enterprise", "social firm", "development trust", "community business", "community co-operative".
>
> **Shared experience:** The best way to tread through the apparent minefield of legal structures is to speak to people who have already set up projects similar to the one you are planning.
>
> **And if you get it wrong you can usually change things later:** Despite the grim associations of the word "legal", the worst that can happen is that you will set up a legal structure which prevents you from enjoying certain tax advantages. If so, set about changing your constitution or your structure before you start paying corporation tax.

Unincorporated associations and basic constitutions

Most community associations, clubs and societies and all charitable trusts are unincorporated associations.

You must have a constitution if you want to raise grants and open a bank account.

When you are getting started a simple constitution may be all you need.

As a community organisation using money provided by the public (through fundraising, grants, donations etc) your constitution needs to explain

> your objectives
>
> how people become ordinary members
>
> how your management committee is appointed
>
> how your assets are protected (so that committee members cannot benefit financially, even if the organisation is wound up)

You can become a limited company later if you need to.

Companies limited by guarantee:

There are three different types of company structure, but only the company limited by guarantee is widely used by community organisations and charities. (Newcomers can usually ignore**companies limited by shares**, and **public limited companies** are not relevant at all.)

The new legal structures you are most likely to hear about are actually variations of the company limited by guarantee. It all sounds complicated, but it's a lot easier when you know how similar they are.

Community Interest Companies (CICs) are designed for social enterprise activities. CICs protect community assets (like charities) but they have fewer restrictions and no direct financial benefits. In practice they offer relatively few benefits for small community organisations.

Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) are a new form of company limited by guarantee which has charitable status "built in". Smaller companies (under £2,000 turnover) at present will still need to use the original two-stage process of creating a limited company and then registering it as a charity with the Charity Commission later. The Ciommssion provides extensive online guidance and model constitutions (www.charitycommission.gov.uk).

Charities are separate:

Charities may take a variety of forms, and can perhaps be seen as a kind of overlay on the different basic legal structures. Here are the types of organisation which can be registered as charities:

Unincorporated associations – the disadvantage for multi-purpose Community Hub organisations is that Committee or Board members will be personally liable for debts if the venture fails.

Charitable trusts – Trusts have the same disadvantages as unincorporated associations, and often have the added drawback of complicated trustee arrangements which make it difficult to know who is really responsible. **Charitable trusts which manage buildings and community projects should consider converting to one of the forms of charitable company.**

Charitable companies limited by guarantee provide a level of protection for the people running the charity. Set up a company using a recommended Charity Commission constitution and then apply to them for registration.

Charitable Incorporated Organisations provide exactly the same protection and operate under much the same rules as charitable companies (except that you don't need to report to Companies House every year). But they are easier to set up.

Should you register as a charity?

Organisations which provide certain types of community benefit and use their resources wholly for this purpose may be regarded as charitable by the Charity Commission. Community Hub projects are likely to qualify as charitable.

Registration as a charity brings a limited number of benefits:

primarily rate relief if you own or lease premises

freedom from corporation tax (but you need to have surplus income to benefit!)

a potentially wider range of funders.

Charity status also significantly restricts in a number of ways how the trustees or directors can operate.

Generally the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. But individual projects should seek advice from Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (www.pavo.org.uk) or discuss their aims with similar organisations before making a decision.

Charities and trading:

Charities can trade: It is not true that charities aren't allowed to trade, as is often claimed. There are a numbers of way they can do so legally without losing the tax advantages of being a charity

Subsidiary companies are a common mechanism for allowing community charities to run businesses which are not connected with their main charitable objectives.

The subsidiary company is usually a company limited by shares with the shareholding owned entirely by the charity.

But beware – there are limits on the way charities can use subsidiaries.

Check with the Charity Commission.

Further help: Trading is largely beyond the scope of this Toolkit. But PAVO (www.pavo.org.uk) and the Wales Co-operative Centre (www.walescooperative.org.uk) can provide help and information. Newcomers should study the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's comprehensive online guide "It's an idea. But is it a Business? – A Guide to Third Sector Trading" at www.wcva.org.uk.

BUILDING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

BUILDING YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND SERVING YOUR MEMBERS
Who is a "member"?
Confusion often arises over what the term "member" means, and you need to be careful to make proper distinctions:

> **Association or company members** are normally entitled to attend general meetings (at least one a year) and to appoint the trustees.
> **"User members"** may be people who pay an annual membership subscription to receive your organisation's services, but who do not have any other rights. Arrangements that include a separate class of user members can lead to resentment between non-voting and voting members. So it's good to avoid them.
> **"Board members" and "management committee members"** are the trustees responsible for the organisation at regular meetings.
>> You may have board advisors or co-opted members who attend meetings but do not have a vote. You should make their position clear.
>> Confusingly, members of subcommittees which you set up for particular tasks may also be called "committee members". They are usually but not always also members of the management committee.

Why have a membership organisation?
Despite the occasional drawbacks, there are strong reasons for building and maintaining a strong membership for your Community Hub organisation. Members can:

> provide feedback on the needs of the community and the effectiveness of your activities and projects
> demonstrate community support to potential funders
> prevent the committee from getting stale or complacent
> provide your future committee members
> act as a recruiting ground for volunteers and, sometimes, financial donors
> rally round if times get hard.

How can you recruit members?

> Never waste an opportunity to sign up members at public meetings, consultations and social events.
> Create tangible benefits for members if you can – discounts on your services, advance notice of activities, links with "time banking" etc.
> Create a members' forum using social networking so that people feel part of the family.
> Combine membership and volunteer recruitment campaigns to avoid duplicated effort.
> Turn the Annual General Meeting into an attractive event – with refreshments, a guest speaker, a presentation evening, a fundraiser or social activities. Sign up new members at the door.
> Offer general meetings through the year to consult with or feedback information to the residents.

Develop a membership policy:

A written membership policy will focus attention on making members attractive and useful:

clarify which groups of people you want to target

identify how certain groups of members, particularly excluded or minority groups, can be attracted and involved

identify membership fees, periods of membership and payment arrangements

specify the benefits of membership, and publicise them

make commitments on communications with members (eg with a periodic e-newsletter).

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

What's the point of volunteering?
Your Community Hub project probably can't survive without a volunteer team .And it shouldn't either. One of the most important community services you can create is a well-managed, flexible and responsive volunteering organisation which both;

supports and extends the work of the Community Hub

provides work experience, transferable skills, training, confidence, a sense of purpose and self-worth, social contacts, occupational therapy, improved mental wellbeing, networking opportunities, hobby interests and many other benefits for members of your community.

What you need to know:
Developing, managing and sustaining volunteering is complex and demanding. Here are a few tips:

managing volunteers is harder than managing paid staff – apply serious effort to acquiring the skills you need

everyone's motive for volunteering is different – so every volunteer must be treated as an individual with distinct wishes and needs

induction is essential, including

a chat with a senior member of the group

a tour of your building and activities

an Induction Pack to take away similar to the one for Committee members

always provide training, support and supervision

don't be afraid to offer to let volunteers take responsibility - the experience can be life-changing for many volunteers

encourage loyalty and a sense of belonging

provide volunteer facilities, refreshments, expenses

encourage suggestions for improving and extending your work

where possible allow them freedom to develop new activities

don't allow a free-for-all – even if the regime is relaxed you should always require volunteers to tell you:

what work they are prepared to do

when they will be available

about changes of their availability in advance

provide written roles and responsibilities like the Code of Conduct for committee members

adopt a Code of Practice for volunteers to make volunteering a more worthwhile experience (a model is available from Wales Council for Voluntary Action www.wvca.org.uk)

governance versus voluntary help: be clear about the distinction between committee members meeting as trustees (a requirement and responsibility) and doing voluntary work to help run your activities (a volunteering role which some members may not want or be able to take on).

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND YOUR COMMITTEE

None of the hard work of setting up and funding your Community Hub project will survive for long unless you can build a strong committee of people to run the organisation. Many people don't give a thought to the skills they need to do this well, and it is often those with past experience of work on committees who most need the guidance and training in teamwork, collective responsibility and sound governance.