

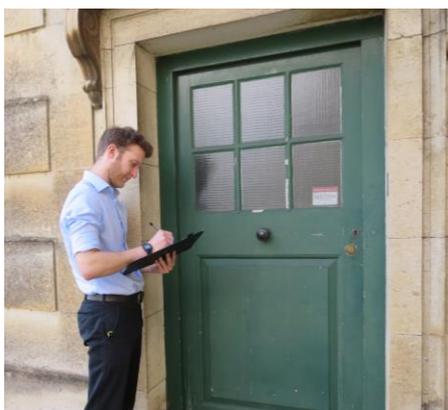


Case Study:

## Energy retrofitting in community buildings: the Wiltshire experience

### Summary

Ten energy audits of community buildings were carried out by Wiltshire Council as part of the SEACS programme in 2013, working closely with the Village Halls Adviser at Community First. This led to practical retrofitting at the halls involved, often through relatively low cost measures such as loft insulation. A long-term programme of action is now being developed, led by Community First, to include both in-depth support for heritage community buildings, as well as on-line guidance and exemplars.



### Objectives

- To achieve practical energy saving measures in community buildings as a direct result of the audits.
- To assess and develop the scope for wider impact, through promotion and sharing of experience among community building managers.
- To encourage community buildings to act as exemplars of energy retrofitting for householders.

### Methodology/approach

The audits were promoted through the Village Halls Association, as well as Wiltshire Churches Together. Ten halls were selected, with a good spread of age, building type and ownership. Half were pre 20<sup>th</sup> century, two were built in 1940-50, and three were modern halls built after 1990. The audits were carried out by an accredited BREEAM assessor from Wiltshire Council, together with the SEACS Ambassador. Reports based on the audits were written up and returned to the building managers, who were encouraged to seek further advice from the Council where needed.

Follow up was then developed by Community First, working with the SEACS Ambassador. This includes promotion at meetings and events, development of a webpage with guidance and exemplars, and involvement of further partners and fundraising to provide more in-depth support for hard-to-treat historic halls.

### Tools used, including those to reach target groups

Existing newsletters were used to promote the project to beneficiaries.

Applicants were asked to complete a simple form, with details of their building. After selection, they were then asked to forward any additional information available, such as energy bills. The audit itself was kept as simple as possible, concentrating on key areas for low cost improvements, such as insulation or draught proofing. The report was split into two sections. The first provided a simple checklist of priority actions. This was followed by more detail and resources on each area.

The information on the Community First website will include case studies of exemplar halls, as well as links and guidance.



## How was the project managed?

The project was carried out by Wiltshire Council, through the SEACS programme, working closely with Community First.

## Who were the project partners?

The lead partners were Wiltshire Council and Community First, with the Village Halls Adviser at Community First playing a key role. The ten halls involved provided feedback on implementation of the audit. Amongst others, the Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting House contributed their experience at the community environment workshop conference, and in welcoming a visit from SEACS partners. The Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust and the Severn Wye Energy Agency are exploring the options for working with Community First in taking this forward in future.

## How was it financed and much did the project cost?

Wiltshire Council provided support in kind through the SEACS programme in the provision of expertise to carry out the audits. Halls were then responsible for finding funding, either from their own reserves or from external sources (eg landfill tax), to carry out improvements. Community First was able to advise on this aspect.

## What were the lessons learned from the project?

- Building managers were not always aware of previous work or audits undertaken. Community building managers should be reminded to keep a file with details of all work carried out. The audit can provide a checklist when any improvement is done, to make sure opportunities for energy retrofitting are not missed.
- There is still plenty of scope for impact through simple, low cost measures. Even the most modern buildings had potential for improvement, such as more shading needed to reduce overheating, or adjustments to the ventilation system. Almost all halls would have benefitted from draught proofing, and several needed to upgrade their fluorescent lights (T12s) to more efficient modern slimline versions. (T8 or T5).
- The older buildings often required specialist technical expertise to deal with non-standard

insulation and other issues, such as ventilation and damp.

- There was little attempt to promote the energy-saving or generation measures installed. This was a missed opportunity. For example, the most modern village hall made no mention of its ground source heat pump, either in display materials in the hall or on its website. While the Village Halls Adviser could put halls with experience in relevant areas in touch with those seeking information, there was no easily accessible web-based resource to promote sharing of information.
- Some halls were at the margins of viability, either because they were in small villages with a limited number of potential users, or because there were several other halls available locally. While energy retrofitting could help make them cheaper to run, any major expenditure was unlikely to be worth it. Low cost measures such as heavy curtains, perhaps available second-hand, or draught proofing were preferable.
- Only one of the halls visited had a source of renewable energy (ground source heat pump). There was potential for solar PV on some, once energy efficiency work had been completed, with the advantage that surplus could be sold back to the grid. Biomass is worth considering for well-used halls off the gas network.
- It takes a long time for halls to implement recommendations, with progress slowed by the need for discussion in committee (an important awareness raising benefit!), committee changes, the need to fundraise etc.

## Links to website information

- [ACRE](#) (Action for Communities in Rural England) provides a national [Village Halls Information Service](#), including a network of [Village Halls Advisers](#), who can advise on audits, funding and all aspects of village hall management. Their service is open to all community buildings.
- For DIY audits, see the [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#) and [National Energy Action](#). The [Severn Wye Energy Agency](#) will analyse a DIY audit (for a fee) and provide recommendations and follow up support.

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