



Village Halls and Community Spaces
February 16, 2023
18.30-20.00

SRA connects communities and organisations to each other across Scotland and links communities with decision makers at Scottish, UK and European levels.

This is achieved by the delivery of:

- the **Scottish Rural Parliament** and
- building the **Rural Movement** - a collective of individuals, communities and organisations which are in and serve rural and island Scotland.

Giving voice to rural and island Scotland!

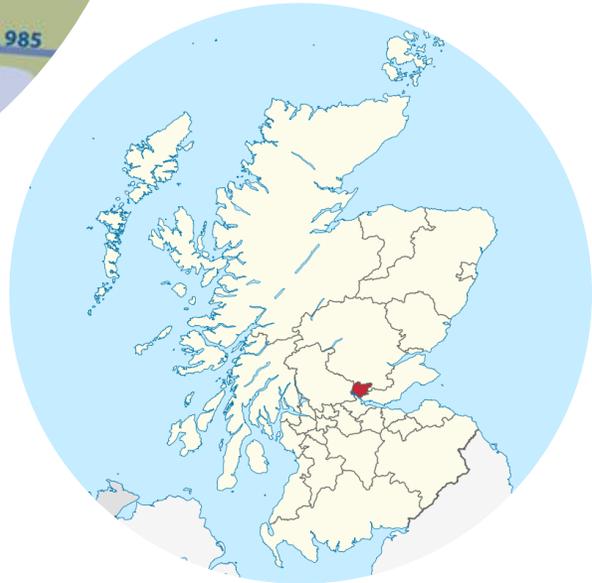




- Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament – **1st to 3rd November 2023 in Fort William**
- 2023 theme is “village halls and community spaces” because everything starts with bringing people together
 - How do we connect village halls and community centres to each other and to all the opportunities out there?
 - How do we make sure the experiences of those running or using village halls and community spaces shapes policy?



Mapping and Connecting The Grassroots: Clackmannanshire Case Study



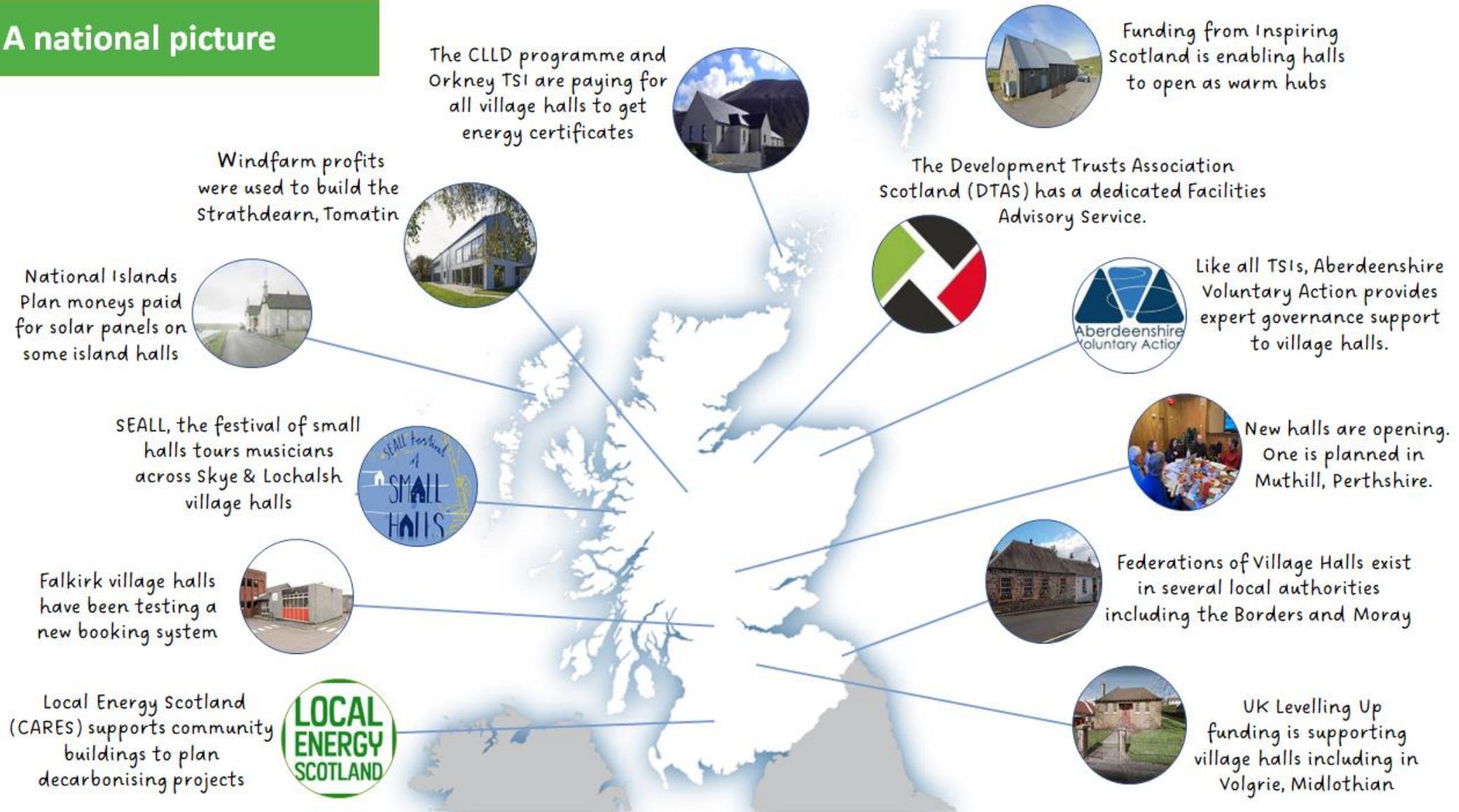
- Not one definition
- Not one service
- Not one user
- Unsung heroes
- Grant funded, but profits, fundraising and donations key
- Challenges include rising cost of living, ageing population and 'bridging the age gap', funding, building repairs
- Solutions, solutions, solutions!

Networking, good will, plugging gaps in service provision, long term funding, younger membership, working in partnership



You can access the report here: <https://www.sra.scot/news-blog/mapping-and-connecting-community-spaces-rural-clackmannanshire>

A national picture



Collaboration is the most important ingredient

- We are working with national organisations to make sure that halls and community centres do not miss out on funding and support opportunities.
- SCVO is leading on developing resources with others to support halls and centres with matters from governance to building maintenance and health & safety.
- We can get excited by more frequent events for halls and centres – big ones like **SCVO's Gathering** and the **Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament** and smaller (but more immediate) ones like this networking event.
- Scottish Rural Network and others are exploring how to connect with village halls – a map? a database?
- ...and how about intergenerational collective leadership workshops for hall board members, given one of the big challenges is succession planning? *Watch this space!*

Restoring & Running Historic Buildings

a discussion with Heritage Trust
Network, DTAS and MAAC Studio

Online networking event, 16th March, 11am - 12:30pm



[Book now!](#)





Championing Village Halls

- **ACRE:** a little about us and the ACRE members
- **ACRE** support for village halls and similar rural community buildings
- **Key issues** facing village halls in England
- **Networking**

Have a look at how ACRE supports and celebrates village halls here: <https://acre.org.uk/village-halls-week-2023/>

What participants at the networking event said

- 47 people attended from all over Scotland
- We shared stories of our village halls - some are included here

In Uist, **Taigh Chearsabhagh** is a community centre and also cultural centre, helping to keep traditional practices alive.

In the **Cairngorm** National Park area, some halls have mobility hubs.

Campbeltown has a community cinema

Mull - Yoga happening in 3 out of 5 areas and pipe lessons in 2!

Killlearn Village Hall in Stirlingshire is home to the Scottish Taiko Festival.

Jura - Dances, weddings, a humanist funeral, bake off, toddler groups, weekly craft fair, Christmas fair, circuit training, community consultations, fundraising dinners, music festival, Jura Fell race hub, rented to a group of people studying lichen for a week!

Dumfries – halls as local markets. Also warm hubs and work hubs. Space for activities that don't include alcohol - no expectation that socialising has to involve drinking.

On **Westray** the school serves as a community centre which has many benefits.

Moray – Moray Wellbeing Hub, Kennel Club, Versus Arthritis running exercise classes

Maud Old Mart rent their building to the NHS; have a gym and a cafe and other businesses

Carnbo Hall, near Kinross- was old village school, bought for £1 in 1989 . Run Hall talks, Coffee & Chats, BBQs to bring community together.

In the **Scottish Borders**, the village halls network has become key to the local authority's resilience strategy

Gillespie Centre Biggar incorporates café and many other activities - Church owned.

In **Shetland** communities are becoming more confident to take ownership of heritage sites.

There is Pickleball played at **Tarland hall**. At **Kinord Hall in Dinnert**, we are looking to put a public access defibrillator on the outside wall.

Victory Hall Aboyne - Good stories, local orchestra and Scottish dancing and newest group is a martial arts youth group.

Mintlaw's **MACBI** has a gym and a childcare facility

Heritage Centre with 1800's class room where children visit from **Aberdeenshire** and Aberdeen City to use slate and chalk and be introduced to the Lochgelly Tawes.

What participants at the networking event said

- We talked about the challenges in running village halls, including:
 - Developing expertise in maintaining the buildings we own, some of which are listed heritage sites
 - Developing expertise in health and safety and other aspects of running activities in a building
 - Developing expertise in governance matters, especially if your hall is not incorporated
 - Getting the right (and affordable) insurance
 - Raising funds for activities and repairs
 - Getting enough volunteers on Boards and to run activities, getting a good age mix of volunteers
 - Covering energy and other costs while keeping prices low for people wanting to hire the hall facilities
 - Playing a part in tackling climate change – insulating halls, solar panels etc. – while finding the money and expertise to do this well is difficult. Also, some buildings are constrained because of their listed status or the land they occupy.
 - Finding land for a community centre in the first place! And for allotments and other community spaces.
 - Negotiating arrangements with local authorities and others who may lease a building to a community, and ensuring those arrangements really do benefit the community and do not just put up barriers...for example if a community is perceived to have its own space already and cannot get funding to explore better alternatives.

What participants at the networking event said

- But mostly we talked about opportunities and solutions:
 - **Shining a light on village halls:** This is becoming easier since halls found themselves at the frontline of community resilience during Covid and Storm Arwen and now with the cost of living crisis. The concept of place-making is also increasingly linked to village halls. We just need the investment and support to better align with this emerging understanding!
 - **Providing a bespoke support service and targeted communications:** Much like SCVO did in the past, there needs to be a tailored support service for village halls and communications that are well targeted so village halls know they are relevant to them. Peer support networks were also suggested – hall committees undertaking learning exchanges or supporting one another with governance matters.
 - **Connecting village halls to each other:** Networking events at both national and regional levels, focused on specific topic of interest but also generally giving village halls a platform to connect. ACRE's "[Village Halls Week](#)" campaign was mentioned as an example of a national initiative which also had regional and local dimensions.
 - **Connecting village halls to national and regional funding and investment programmes:** A participant from the Scottish Borders offered an example of the Council and two Third Sector Interfaces, through the local Federations of Village Halls, supporting village halls to access packages of funding from multiple sources (local authority, windfarm moneys, trust funding) for building improvements and repairs. This coordinated approach is underpinned (given policy coherence) by the Council's resilience strategy.

Participants noted that there are multiple national and regional funding programmes that village halls could tap into. Some of these are listed on Slide 6 of this presentation, others are specific to supporting communities to develop capital projects like mobility hubs or deliver policy priorities such as 20 minute neighbourhoods. Many of these opportunities have short application windows which present barriers for halls which are mainly run by volunteers. A more considered (and coordinated) approach by funders could make an enormous difference.

Bespoke support and funding for halls to develop income streams (as social enterprises) was also suggested.

What participants at the networking event said

- And more opportunities and solutions:
 - **Building awareness of mobile services and touring groups** which bring so many opportunities and experiences to communities in both rural and island places. All halls should have the opportunity to link to these.
 - **Policy initiatives being village-hall proofed:** Sometimes great policy initiatives do not work for large number of village halls. One participant noted for example that the Home Energy Scotland (CARES) grant system supports the insulation of more modern buildings with cavity walls but not solid wall buildings.
 - **Learning from England and further afield:** As well as the work of ACRE in England, the Finnish Village Movement Association was mentioned which has supported hundreds of village halls since the 1980s.

And finally one unanswered, million dollar questions in the zoom chat...for the next networking meeting perhaps!

“How much community space is enough? So many different activities make a community.”



Celebrating community spaces in rural
and island Scotland.

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<https://www.sra.scot/form/sra-membership>