

Village halls, rural community hubs and buildings: The size, scale, scope and potential of these community business



Nick Scott and Yvonne Probert

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About this report

This research was funded in 2017 through the Power to Change Research Institute's open research grants programme. The open research grants programme aims to support the community business sector and its partners to deliver the evidence the sector needs for its own development, and to make the case for the value of community business. The research is conducted independently of Power to Change. The work and any views presented are the authors' own.

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Published by The Power to Change Trust (2018)



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Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to all the people who participated in this research, without whom this study would not have been possible. Our special thanks go to the 50 members of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings across North Yorkshire and Durham Dales, who willingly gave their time and insights during interviews – the vast majority of whom represent a hidden army of volunteers who work tirelessly for their rural communities. We also extend our gratitude to the 87 individuals/organisations who took the time to complete the online surveys.

Thanks also go to the 18 representatives from business support providers and stakeholder organisations interviewed as part of this research and to the ten organisations who agreed to be the subjects of case studies.

We would also like to thank the Power to Change Research Institute for awarding the grant that enabled us to undertake this research, which has provided a rich seam of useful information for our respective organisations.

Lastly, we would like to extend our thanks to Ailbhe McNabola, Head of Research and Policy and Suzanne Perry, Research Officer at Power to Change for being trusting and accommodating funders.

Terminology

The research team took the decision to describe the organisations consulted as village halls, rural community hubs and buildings because these are the terms used and recognised by the organisations themselves.

Executive summary

Introduction

Community First Yorkshire (CFY) in partnership with Durham Community Action (DCA) undertook this eleven-month research project across the two rural geographies of North Yorkshire and Durham Dales. The aim was to explore the size, scale, scope, potential and future pipeline of community business from amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, to see if this was larger or smaller than previously estimated. In the Community Business Market in 2016 report (Hull *et al*, 2016), the research team conservatively estimated that 9% of village halls in England would qualify as community businesses, according to the Power to Change definition. The Power to Change definition and four tests of community business were used throughout this research:

- **Locally rooted** – Based in local communities, typically smaller in size than a local authority, well defined and possibly including a number of postcodes or villages. Where people self-identify with that area and with a majority of staff, volunteers and other stakeholders being drawn from the local community and reflecting its diversity.
- **Accountable to the local community** – Being locally controlled with the local community having a genuine say in how the business is run, e.g. through regular consultation, membership or ownership. Having formal structures to engage a large number of local people on a frequent and ongoing basis and with a large majority of the management and trustees being drawn from the local community.
- **Trading for the benefit of the local community** – Profits must stay in the area and the organisation must have a clear trading model, with the majority of profits being distributed locally and used to deliver local benefit.
- **Broad community impact** – Organisations must address challenges in their local community and contribute to a broader sense of confidence and pride in a place. They must also be able to articulate how they are tackling the specific issues that exist in their community and be able to show the impact they are making.

Methodology

The research team comprised six people drawn from CFY and DCA. A qualitative and quantitative research methodology was adopted, and the team developed and used the following research methods: desk-based research; online survey; semi-structured interviews with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings and semi-structured interviews with business support provider and stakeholder organisations. Ten case studies were also developed.

The online survey was circulated to 428 organisations (353 in North Yorkshire and 75 in Durham Dales). 87 responses were received (78 from North Yorkshire and nine from Durham Dales), representing a 20% response rate. 50 in-depth interviews with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings were undertaken (25 interviews per area).

Findings

64% of online survey respondents and 52% of interviewees identified themselves as a community business once the four tests above were explained to them.

A healthy potential future pipeline of community business was found amongst those interviewed 36% (N. 18) and surveyed 31% (N. 11). Caution should be used with these percentages, since they are based on organisations' self-identification as community business. However, even allowing for ineligibility should organisations fail to satisfy the four community business tests and where the perceived appetite to know more or transition to becoming a community business fails to materialise, this research still suggests that the percentage of community business from amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings is greater than the 9% estimated by Hull *et al* (2016) when looking at the size of this community business sector.

Knowledge of Power to Change and the term community business was extremely low. The term 'community business' was not widely used, understood or liked and was not felt to be an appropriate label for the following reasons: fear of alienating the local community; losing volunteers; being perceived to be all about profit and making payments to directors.

The most frequently cited challenges facing organisations wanting to grow or develop into a community business were the lack of capacity, time and skills to both develop and grow their organisations because of their reliance on relatively small cohorts of ageing volunteers. Recruiting new younger volunteers and members was also a major challenge. The role of key individuals within organisations was seen as critical and often, change, or the lack of it, was seen as being down to these people.

Amongst organisations surveyed and interviewed there was limited understanding of the term broad community impact and how to evidence and report on this. This is an area that village halls, rural community hubs and buildings need support with. Theory of Change and inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts, were by and large unfamiliar terms amongst those interviewed.

The vast majority of organisations surveyed and interviewed generated income through trading but did not perceive their income-generating activities in this way. They preferred to call their profits a 'surplus' and did not want to be seen as profit-making organisations.

Conclusions and recommendations

The following recommendations are made to support the (larger than anticipated) existing and potential future pipeline of community business from amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings:

Further awareness-raising to enhance understanding of the term community business amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, Local Enterprise Partnerships, public sector bodies, other infrastructure support agencies and the wider public. The use of appropriate and community-friendly language when working with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings is pertinent, and this is particularly the case around trading.

A pilot project to work with a handful of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings to evidence and report on their social value and impact. This could feed into the development of a bespoke framework/toolkit for use by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, alongside the provision of training workshops to enable the capturing, measuring, recording and reporting of community impact.

Development of a future support offer for transitioning organisations that is flexible, locally accessible and transformational. Consideration could be given to developing a programme of support to recruit a new cohort of volunteers, for a time limited and project focussed activity, who want to explore community business opportunities and developments with their village halls, rural community hubs and buildings. They could be asked and supported to undertake community business feasibility studies for consideration.

1. Introduction

In March 2017 Community First Yorkshire (CFY), formerly Rural Action Yorkshire, in partnership with Durham Community Action (DCA) were awarded a grant from the Power to Change Research Institute to explore the size, scale, scope, potential and future pipeline of community business from amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings.

The starting point for this research was Power to Change's (PtC's) 'Community Business Market 2016' Report (Hull *et al*, 2016), which conservatively estimated that around 900 of the 10,000 village halls across England would qualify as a community business. This equates to 9% of all village halls being categorised as community businesses.

CFY's and DCA's knowledge of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings and experience of delivering support programmes to these organisations suggested to the research group that this figure was too low. This inspired the research team to explore whether the proportion of community business from amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings was greater than the 9% estimate. The research team was also curious to establish whether community business was 'under the radar' or whether organisations were simply not identifying themselves as community business.

1.1 Background to the study area and research team

The research focussed on two distinct and adjoining geographies, namely North Yorkshire and Durham Dales. Rural communities across the country face many challenges, some of which have been exacerbated by austerity. These include: limited public transport; poor broadband and mobile phone network coverage; lack of affordable housing; reduced access to services such as GPs and dentists; closures of local shops, post offices and banks; greater numbers of older people as a percentage of rural populations when compared with urban areas; higher levels of fuel poverty and seasonal employment.

North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire is England's largest rural county with a population of 604,900 dispersed over 8,654 square kilometres or 3,341 square miles. It is a non-metropolitan county (or shire county) with one County Council, seven districts, 24 Town Councils and 451 Parish Councils.

It has two cities (York and Ripon), two National Parks (Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors) which cover around 40% of the County and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Howardian Hills and Nidderdale. 317,300 or 52.5% of the population are economically active, 6,400 or 2% of those economically active are unemployed. 310,900 are in employment of which 66,800 are self-employed. 57.9% of the population live in rural areas – the remainder in towns and cities. (ONS 2016)

Community First Yorkshire

CFY (www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk) operates across North, South and West Yorkshire with a staff team of 28 and has been supporting rural communities since 1937. CFY do this in a number of ways: providing advice, support and information to village halls and rural community hubs and buildings; statistical reporting for Defra and co-producing projects to support disadvantaged/vulnerable individuals within rural communities' e.g. older people who may be socially isolated and low-income people who may struggle to pay fuel bills etc. Over the past few years CFY has been delivering projects to support the development of rural community hubs, often working with village halls and other rural community buildings to ensure they become sustainable through the development of trading activities (e.g. Village SOS Projects, Community Hub Model Development).

Durham Dales (Teesdale and Weardale) with County Durham

County Durham lies in the North East of England and is a largely rural area. Durham Dales is the name given to a large area in the west of County Durham and has an approximate population of 33,100. (ONS, 2016). Durham Dales crosses the north western and south western corners of County Durham and is served by two Area Action Partnerships (AAPs); Weardale in the north west and Teesdale in the south west. AAPs were introduced in County Durham in 2009 as part of the reorganisation of local government. There are 14 Partnerships covering all areas of the county. AAPs have been set up to give people in County Durham a greater choice and voice in local affairs. The AAPs allow people to have a say on services and give organisations the chance to speak directly with local communities.

Weardale AAP stretches from Witton-le-Wear in the south east to Cornriggs in the north west and is bordered by Northumberland and Cumbria to the north and west. It is one of the most rural areas within the north of England spanning 155.3 square miles with a population density of 0.2 (people/hectare), making it the least densely populated area in the county.

Teesdale AAP of Teesdale stretches from Greta Bridge in the south east to Harwood in the north west and is bordered by North Yorkshire to the south and Cumbria to the west. It is also 'rural' in nature covering an area of over 322.8 square miles, with a population density of 0.3 (people/hectare), substantially lower than that of the county (2.3). The Upper Tees valley lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the main town is Barnard Castle situated on the banks of the river Tees.

Durham Community Action

DCA (www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk) operates across County Durham with a staff team of 20 and has been supporting communities since 1935. DCA is recognised through the County Durham Partnership as the primary voluntary and community sector support organisation for the County. DCA provide advocacy and representation on behalf of communities to the partnership Board and through a number of thematic partnerships in the County. Together with colleagues in the ACRE network, DCA work with government departments such as DEFRA to report on policy roll out in rural communities and, through our experience and knowledge of the local communities DCA serve, DCA are also able to help shape and influence policy.

DCA work with communities is delivered through a series of five key priorities: getting voices heard, enabling enterprise, supporting volunteering, promoting better health and helping communities. DCA have a small team of community development specialists and advisers, who broker community networks, provide training, information, advice and case work support for community groups and organisations. DCA also have a long track record of incubating sustainable new community initiatives which address community needs.

1.2 Defining community business

Throughout the study Power to Change's four tests of community business were used (www.powertochange.org.uk/what-is-community-business):

- **Locally rooted** – Based in local communities, typically smaller in size than a local authority, well defined and possibly including a number of postcodes or villages. Where people self-identify with that area and with a majority of staff, volunteers and other stakeholders being drawn from the local community and reflecting its diversity.
- **Accountable to the local community** – Being locally controlled with the local community having a genuine say in how the business is run, e.g. through regular consultation, membership or ownership. Having formal structures to engage a large number of local people on a frequent and ongoing basis and with a large majority of the management and trustees being drawn from the local community.
- **Trading for the benefit of the local community** – Profits must stay in the area and the organisation must have a clear trading model, with the majority of profits being distributed locally and used to deliver local benefit.
- **Broad community impact** – Organisations must address challenges in their local community and contribute to a broader sense of confidence and pride in a place. They must also be able to articulate how they are tackling the specific issues that exist in their community and be able to show the impact they are making.

2. Methodology

A qualitative and quantitative research methodology was developed to understand the needs and opportunities of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings as existing and pipeline community business, and to explore levels of understanding of community business amongst business support providers and key stakeholders across each geography.

Best use was made of the extensive practitioner expertise and knowledge across the two geographies amongst the research group. The range of research methods and participants provided a depth of understanding that could otherwise have remained under-explored or hidden from view.

2.1 Research aims

The research team hoped the study would benefit the wider community business sector in the following ways:

- Provide a more robust basis for calculating the number of village hall, rural community hubs and buildings as community business than is currently used. Providing a good sample size from which to extrapolate information which could be used as a basis for estimating elsewhere.
- Identify a likely pipeline of future village hall, rural community hub and building community business to inform future policy and strategy development, locally, sub regionally and nationally.
- Inform, educate and raise the profile of community business amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings themselves.
- Raise the profile of community business at strategic, business support and wider community levels.
- Provide examples of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings as community business.
- Support networking opportunities amongst community business.
- Identify rural village hall, community hub and buildings community business champions.
- Identify and communicate the needs and issues facing village hall, rural community hub and building community business– both extant and aspiring.
- Celebrate the range and scope of village hall, rural community hub and building community business across the two geographies and all the good work they deliver in terms of employment creation, trading with social purposes and social value creation.
- Identify key challenges and barriers and how they might best be overcome for transitioning village halls, rural community hubs and buildings.

2.2 Research questions

The online survey and interviews were designed to address the following research questions:

1. Using Power to Change's four tests: how many village halls, rural community hubs and buildings qualify as community business (both now and pipeline)? Is the percentage of those sampled greater or fewer than the 9% estimate previously used?
2. To what extent is the term 'community business' understood and used by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, business support providers and other stakeholders?
3. What factors are contributing to village halls, rural community hubs and buildings becoming community business?
4. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages for village halls, rural community hubs and buildings identifying/branding themselves as community business?
5. What are the key challenges and barriers to village halls, rural community hubs and buildings either establishing themselves as community business or growing their community business?
6. How many have an appetite to transition? What would a support offer look like, locally and nationally?
7. Do village hall, rural community hubs and buildings community business capture and report on their social value and social impact?
8. What role do key individuals sitting on village hall, rural community hubs and buildings committees and boards play in transforming their organisations into community business?

2.3 Research tools

To answer the research questions above five types of data collection were used:

Desk research to identify business support provider and stakeholder organisations.

Online survey using survey monkey, distributed to 428 village halls, rural community hubs and buildings across both geographies. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the online survey.

Semi structured interviews were undertaken with 18 **key stakeholder and business support provider organisations**, selected across the two areas to provide a representative sample. A copy of the aide memoire used for interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Case studies. Ten case studies were developed to add depth and nuance and to represent the range and variety of organisations interviewed. These can be found in Appendix D.

Table 1: Number of participants and case studies

Research Method	CFY	DCA	Total
Online survey circulation numbers	N. 353	N. 75	N. 428
Online survey response numbers and response rate	22% (N.78)	12% (N.9)	20% (N. 87)
Number of interviews: Business Support Provider and Stakeholder	N. 8	N. 10	N. 18
Number of interviews: Village Hall, Rural Community Hub and Building	N. 25	N. 25	N. 50
Number of case studies developed	N. 5	N. 5	N. 10

Data analysis

The online survey data was gathered and analysed using Survey Monkey. During each set of semi-structured interviews detailed notes were taken and hand coded for analysis. The conversational approach taken at the semi-structured interviews provided a depth of data which required detailed interpretation and analysis. The findings for each research question and geography were recorded and reported separately and examined and analysed by the research team to identify common areas and points of differentiation across the two geographies and used to inform the conclusions and recommendations in this report.

North Yorkshire research details

CFY's database of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings was used to circulate the online survey, this being the most comprehensive list for the region. After some initial database cleansing to remove duplicates the online survey was sent to 353 organisations across North Yorkshire. Organisations were initially given six weeks to respond but this deadline was subsequently extended and follow up email prompts sent to encourage responses. A £100 incentive was used to encourage responses, and this was awarded to one randomly selected organisation who had completed the online survey.

78 responses were received from 67 organisations – a response rate of 22% and 19% respectively. Organisational multiple responses resulted when more than one person completed the online survey for the same organisation. A decision to include the full 78 responses for analysis purposes was made because it was not possible to randomly select just one response from organisations with multiple online survey submissions.

76 different (unique) village halls, rural community hubs and buildings were involved in the research across North Yorkshire: 67 completed online surveys (16 of whom took part in interviews too) and a further nine who were interviewed and did not complete the online survey. It was for this reason and to avoid double counting, we decided to separately report the survey and interview findings.

25 interviews were undertaken with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, the vast majority of which were face to face interviews in organisation's premises. Interviews took between two to three hours each and detailed notes were taken and written up using a standard template shortly afterwards.

There was a dearth of business support provision across North Yorkshire and where it did exist, it was primarily web based, signposting, mentoring or transactional in nature. Desk research revealed a list of 17 potential organisations to interview, but several failed to respond to repeated requests for interviews. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were undertaken with eight business support provider and stakeholder organisations, using the agreed aide memoire. Interviewees included those from: County Council, District Councils, infrastructure support organisations, Local Enterprise Partnership, third sector support organisations, grant and loan making organisations and national support organisations.

Durham Dales research details

DCA's previous experience of distributing online surveys in County Durham with community groups using a general call out have yielded poor response rates. The online survey was circulated through DCA's database to a targeted group of 75 organisations. In line with CFY timeframes, the deadline was extended, and organisations were encouraged to complete the survey by follow up phone calls and emails. Nine responses were received. Whilst this represents a response rate of 12%, given the small number of returns, a decision was made to include the findings in the report.

DCA undertook semi-structured face-to-face interviews with representatives from 25 different village halls, rural community hubs and buildings who were based in and delivering community services within the Durham Dales area. These provided a variety of different offers including village halls, community hubs, community transport, sports facilities and art/exhibition space. The interviews were in locations within the Durham Dales and in the majority of cases, at the community business/venue that was under discussion. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were undertaken by the community support officers using the agreed aide memoire.

None of the 25 organisations interviewed had completed an online survey so, for DCA, these were a separate sample set and additional to the nine online survey respondent organisations.

DCA also undertook ten face-to-face interviews with business support providers and stakeholders which included: social enterprise/business support organisations, enterprise agencies, Durham County Council, Action Area Partnerships and voluntary and community sector support providers.

3. Findings

The following sections show the aggregated research findings from North Yorkshire and Durham Dales, derived from: responses to the online survey (hereinafter referred to as respondents); notes from the in-depth interviews with village hall, rural community hubs and buildings (hereinafter referred to as interviewees) and insights from interviews with business support provider organisations, local authorities, infrastructure support organisations, local partnerships, third sector support agencies and local enterprise partnerships (hereinafter referred to as stakeholders).

3.1 Numbers and understanding of community business

Levels of understanding and use of the term ‘community business’

When asked the question ‘What do you understand by the term community business?’ no respondent was able to fully describe a community business in terms of the Power to Change’s four tests and 17% (N. 13) said they had no idea. Despite this, definitions and descriptions of community business were often very much linked and close to the PtC definitions and included:

“A business run by and for the community.”

“Any business whose main aim is to better their local community.”

“Using a building for cottage industry or training.”

“Profit making enterprise run by local people.”

“Enabling activities that benefit the whole community, with some activities helping to subsidise others.”

When interviewees were asked the same question, none were able to accurately describe a community business in terms of Power to Change’s qualifying tests and 14% (N. 7) of interviewees had not heard of community business and did not know what they were. However, most recognised it was a business run by and for the community. Interviewees’ descriptions were similar to survey respondents and included:

“A business that works for the community. Any profit that is made is put back into the community.”

“I have never heard of the term, but it is self-explanatory.”

“A community business is something like a community shop, ran in a village, or a pub which has lots of services in it and isn’t just a pub.”

“Not sure really ... A business is what most people identify as a business where they sell something. I would have to look into what it actually means.”

There were significant differences in the levels of stakeholders' understanding of community business across the two geographies. All ten stakeholders in Durham Dales could accurately define a community business and the majority used Power to Change's definition. In North Yorkshire, only stakeholders from the Third Sector with previous experience of Power to Change, either as a recipient of funding or through partnership work, understood and could appropriately describe a community business. Other North Yorkshire stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Authorities were not aware of Power to Change or familiar with the term community business and therefore guessed at its meaning. As was the case in Durham Dales, North Yorkshire stakeholders often used the terms 'community business', 'community enterprise' and 'social enterprise' interchangeably, which suggests they also found it difficult to differentiate.

No stakeholder organisations in either geographies, who provided business support, had community business as a specific measurable output in their programmes.

Apart from stakeholders in Durham Dales, these findings suggest that community business was both an unfamiliar term and one which was not widely understood by the interviewees and respondents.

Organisational types and latent community business

Respondents were asked to describe their organisations and could choose multiple descriptors. Table 2 below shows those most frequently chosen:

Table 2: Organisational type



Community business was the least chosen description at 9% (N. 7). However, once the term community business was explained using Power to Change's four qualifying tests, the number of respondents subsequently describing themselves as community business rose to 64% (N. 54).

When asked to explain their responses, these ranged from:

“Businesses usually make a profit for the owner, we aim to maintain and improve our asset for the sake of the community.”

“It is the word trading which I don’t agree with. We run events for local people to attend. I don’t consider that trading, but maybe you do. Otherwise we fit the criteria.

“It just doesn’t feel the right description for what we are doing.”

Some respondents queried the four tests, for instance, respondents wrote:

“It is legally impossible for an organisation to be accountable to a community. An organisation is accountable to its members or shareholders, not to the general public. The only type of legal entity which comes close to this is the parish council, but even they are only accountable to registered electors and so people under 18 years old have no say in how they are run.

“It depends on how you translate the word “trading”. The organisation does not trade as a profit led business, but as a voluntary group of people who wish to ensure our community have the same opportunities as urban areas.”

There was a reluctance amongst respondents, to use the term community business, even when applicable.

“Not thought of ourselves as one because we don’t see ourselves as a business, but actually we are if we think about it. Business doesn’t sound right for us.”

“We have to earn enough to have a surplus which can be used for improving the building and trying out new activities. Don’t think the community would see it as a community business.”

“Really don’t like the term community business, it implies competition and trading which is not what we are about. We are here to provide a building and to help support those older and vulnerable members of our community who need somewhere to meet and enjoy themselves.”

“It would be detrimental to be seen as a business as this would affect how the community views them”

52%

(N. 26) of interviewees said they would describe themselves as a community business once the four tests were explained. This figure was slightly higher for Durham Dales at 64% compared to 40% in North Yorkshire.

These findings point towards the term community business not being widely known about, being miss-understood and not particularly liked amongst those surveyed and interviewed. However, the findings also point towards a considerably greater percentage of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings being community businesses than previously estimated, even though these organisations did not initially choose to identify themselves as such.

Appetite to transition and pipeline community businesses

Of the online survey respondents who did not identify themselves as a community business 31% (N. 11) said they might be interested in exploring being one in the future and 69% (N. 24) said they would not. Reasons given for being interested included: gaining more income to help with improvements and to generate further trading income to help diversify income streams.

Explanations given as to why organisations were not interested in pursuing community business included:

“We are a very small village that does not have the population to sustain such a venture.”

“The lack of available volunteers to facilitate change. “

“We do not want to substantially increase our hiring charges.”

“Part of the criteria is to make a profit to put back into community, we rent space to that community. To make a profit (or break even) charges need to be higher and probably unaffordable for small community groups. Probably not possible in a rural area.”

“The time taken to develop in this way is beyond what we are looking for.”

14%

(N. 7) were positive about their appetite to transition and said:

“Yes, definitely want to explore this further so we can make informed decisions about our future.”

“Yes, there could be now that we have thought about it. On the one hand we are trading by hiring out our hall and it could be interesting to think what we could do. As a new committee we are open to new ideas and it be interesting to know more.”

22%

(N. 11) said they might be interested

“We would welcome advice on where to go for this in the future.”

“This would have to be looked at by the whole committee and agreed. If there was money available for specific projects, then it could be something that could be looked into.”

“The village hall committee is always trying to find new ideas and ways to survive. We need to have a good progression route to be sustainable and to have a future for the hall in the village.”

38% (N. 19) said no and gave the following reasons:

“No, I don’t think the geographical area we are based in supports it. The villages and people are so spread out there isn’t a community or village. It’s more farms and houses spread out over the parish.”

“No, it wouldn’t be seen as a positive in the community.”

“No not really, we don’t really understand what the term means and why we would want to change to this. It depends on the definition of the term and we would have to have a lot more information before we could make a decision.”

These findings demonstrate that amongst those interviewed the numbers of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings is greater than the 9% a priori estimate, with 26% (N. 13) already believing themselves to be community businesses, even if they had not previously defined themselves as such. Furthermore, the numbers point towards a healthy pipeline of organisations, with 36% (N. 18) interested in knowing more and exploring becoming community businesses in the future.

Locally rooted

97% (N. 83) of respondents claimed to be locally rooted and were clear about the physical location of their organisations and the geographical communities they served – primarily small rural towns and villages.

100%

(N. 50) of interviewees said they were locally rooted and identified the local geographical communities they served. The vast majority claimed to be the only community facility and meeting space within their communities.

Quotes included:

“The hall is physically rooted in the village, it is an integral part of community life.”

“We are the only community building in the village and it is a place where people can go and meet and get together ... We are not on a bus route and are quite a way from other villages and the market town.”

“It has taken a long time to become rooted in the local community, as originally it was designed for the local youth. This quickly changed when the funding for the youth provision was withdrawn and we needed to attract users of all ages. We also needed to start charging for activities and services which took a while for people to understand. We were perceived as a County Council building and not a charity and that took a long time to correct.”

This data suggests that the vast majority of those surveyed online and interviewed were locally rooted organisations. Almost all organisations owned their own buildings, be they a village hall, rural community hub, pub, sports facility or community centre. Management committees by and large believed their roles to be around maintaining these facilities and ensuring their use for the whole community, particularly those at risk of isolation or other disadvantage. Often the buildings owned provided the only such community facility/asset in the village or town.

Trading

80% (N. 69) of respondents felt they traded for the benefit of the local community. 66% (N. 56) reported that the majority of their income came mainly from room hire within their facilities and 30% (N. 26) reported income from a mix of room hire and other activities such as: weekly afternoon cafés, bar sales at events, afternoon teas in summer, bonfire displays, use by village school, snooker clubs, rental of an associated flat, running a lottery, sale of assets (i.e. land and property), hot desking, low cost art and business workshops, speed awareness workshops, lease to a veterinary practice and a short term let to a financial advisor. 4% (N. 2) of respondents cited grants as their main source of income, but this was because they had recently undergone sizeable capital refurbishments for which they had secured grants from Reaching Communities Lottery funding.

96% (N. 24) of interviewees in North Yorkshire reported that the majority of their income came from hiring out space in their facilities. The percentage of Durham Dales Village Halls reporting majority income from hiring out space was lower at 66%, with 34% of organisations citing other major income sources such as grants from Parish Councils, County Council, Area Action Partnerships and Big Lottery or from delivering an environmental education project and admission fees.

One respondent was worried that if they charged for services it would go against their ethos of providing free services to those most vulnerable in their community.

There were differing levels of understanding about the term 'trading' amongst those surveyed and interviewed. A significant majority did not regard hiring out space as a trading activity, until comparisons were made with other function rooms doing the same and calling it trading. Similarly, most organisations spoke about 'making a surplus' rather than profit and referred to 'income' as opposed to sales. Language is therefore an important issue in the context of community business. Community fundraising efforts amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings were frequently cited as income-generating activities undertaken to cover running costs. These activities usually attracted wider support from village members and volunteers adding to organisations' social capital and tapping into micro-volunteering opportunities.

81%

(N. 70) of respondents and 92% of interviewees believed their organisations were accountable to the local community. Of those who offered explanations as to how they were accountable, reference to the physical location of their building being in the heart of the rural community it served, local membership, boards and trustees being made up of local people, being open to all and holding open meetings and AGMs were most frequently cited. Respondents' quotes to substantiate accountability ranged from:

"We are a registered charity."

"Linked to the Parish Council."

"Our membership and board are made up of members of the local community."

"Open public committee meetings."

"It is managed by 11 local trustees and owned by its 1000+ members."

"We are regularly communicating with the community about their needs and to be successful we must fulfil their requirements."

"We work closely with the local schools, the AAP young peoples' task and finish group and carry out regular consultations with our young people to ensure we are providing the services and making a positive impact."

"We complete consultations when needed. Our trustees come from the local community and are volunteers."

"Yes, mostly through our AGM. Anyone can be on our committee, but we mostly update people informally through word of mouth. It is a small village and we all talk to each other."

"It is very important to be accountable and open in what we do, and we really want the community to understand what we do and get involved. The trustees make day to day decisions about running the hall, but we ask for ideas and get feedback from the community, after all it is not our hall, it is the communities."

Some respondents were unsure about the term accountability, as can be seen from these responses:

"Not quite sure about this one as we are fundamentally a local group/committee that ensures the village hall is kept in good running order to provide a building that serves the village."

"To be honest I am not sure how to answer this question. I have answered yes because I believe we have a responsibility to the local community as a whole ..."

In general terms, most interviewees felt their group or organisation was accountable to their community, however their understanding of the term accountable varied significantly. In some cases, the accountability they demonstrated was around governance requirements and not around meeting the needs of their community. Respondents referenced the following ways of responding to community need:

“We have twice weekly community drop ins and local residents, businesses and charities come in and give feedback and suggest things they would like us to do ... We are in the process of forming a local advisory group which will be another aspect of local engagement.”

“We are in regular communication with the community about their needs and to be successful we must fulfil their requirements.”

Interviewees felt they were in tune with community needs and referenced the following:

“Whenever new projects are developed there has been community consultation in the past and will be again in the future.”

“We hold consultations with the community when we wish to get their ideas and if we are doing something they need to know about and need their support.”

“We do an annual survey of the whole village to find out what the community wants from the shop. What they like about it, what they don't like, what they would like to see stocked etc.,

There was a general sense that village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, whilst open to all sections of their local communities, tended to be used more by certain groups than others – most notably older people. Whilst community consultations and online surveys were mentioned by respondents and interviewees as ways of finding out about community needs, the use of these was by no means widespread or regular – something to be expected given that volunteers run these organisations and their limited capacity and time to undertake such extensive pieces of work on an annual basis.

Broad community impact

99%

(N. 86) of respondents felt their organisations had broad community impact. Responses to qualify these claims included:

“We have groups for all ages groups, from baby massage and toddler groups to elderly lunch clubs and OAP Bingo and everything in between.”

“We will be recording the usage of the facility and also trying to measure the impact by pre and post surveys.”

“We're trying to create a space that brings everyone from the community together. We are also working with other organisations in the village to try and broaden what we do to capture different audiences. But there are some section of the community who remain immune to our charms!!”

“Unfortunately, most of our impact is anecdotal, we have not yet found a simple way of measuring our impact other than recording the questions/support that people ask of us.”

88%

(N. 44) of interviewees felt their organisations delivered positive and broad community impact. This was usually attributed to the numbers using facilities, increased activities, positive feedback from building users, repeat business and from surveys. Comments on broad community impact included:

“We fill in monitoring forms for any grants we do receive to show outcome.”

“User groups are represented in the committee ... We are a very busy hall so if we were not making a positive impact people would not keep coming back to use the hall.”

There were differing levels of understanding of the term broad community impact. Collection of evidence to support broad community impact was patchy and largely anecdotal and represents a challenging area for village halls, rural community hubs and buildings. Furthermore, whilst the majority of respondents and interviewees cited their main source of income coming from hiring out space within their facilities, they did not necessarily have details of participants, audiences or beneficiaries using their facilities, as these would sit with the organisations delivering these activities or services. This also begs the question; who is having the impact?

There was little evidence to suggest that outcome and impact data was being measured, monitored and managed in robust or systematic ways by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings. The exceptions to this were those in receipt of funding with requirements to report against outputs, outcomes and impacts. Notwithstanding this, anecdotally village halls, rural community hubs and buildings do deliver broad community impact and other social impacts.

3.2 Factors that encourage village halls, rural community hubs and buildings to become community business

More disadvantages than advantages were noted by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings when considering whether to identify themselves as community businesses. This could, in part, be explained by the lack of understanding of the term amongst those surveyed online and interviewed.

Perceived disadvantages

Perceived disadvantages identified amongst those interviewed included:

“We would be concerned that people would think there would be personal gain involved if it was to be called a community business.”

“We would expect a negative response from the community to the change if we made it. We think that the community would view the business as an outside organisation and not as part of the village community.”

“It would put the community off, as they would not understand why the village hall was calling itself a community business.”

“It may make the community suspicious.”

Stakeholders identified the following disadvantages:

“Potential for dilution and confusion in the market place with terms such as community enterprise, social enterprise. Creates a hierarchy in terms of serving communities of place rather than communities of interest.”

“People might think a community business is small with a limited shelf life, as opposed to being a more permanent established organisation rooted in a rural area.”

“Potential disengagement of some sections of the community – profit motives, potential judgement of ethos/motives.”

Perceived advantages

Perceived advantages amongst those interviewed included:

“It would possibly be a positive for funders depending on how switched on they are.”

“The advantage is that it is a pull in funding, the community would support a community business more as they can see that the money they are spending money is going back into the centre and the community.”

“This was the only way the village could keep its shop and post office because no one was willing to buy the shop as a going concern and run it privately.”

“More people would come forward to help with the work, thinking it is a more upmarket organisation. It could create a bigger income.”

“There might be advantages to organisations such as ... when going for contracts.”

Across North Yorkshire stakeholders and business support provider organisations identified more advantages than disadvantages with being a community business:

“Transforming community in terms of power and influence.”

“Access to Power to Change money.”

“Good for the sector externally if use this language, with for example the LEP, who may see the sector as ‘do gooding’ amateurs going from one grant to another. Communicating a mind-set, socially responsible directors.”

“Outward looking organisations and dual function of delivering activities and benefit for the local community involved.”

“Retains attachment to the community. This sentimentality induces particular buy-in linked to, for example, a Post Office or local pub to support community share issues, user engagement, involvement, financial support and ownership. Works best in affluent areas. Community is part of a strong brand for investors and funders.”

In Durham Dales stakeholders identified a mix of advantages:

“Advantage in designating as a business for the community by the community in order to benefit the community – impact on local beneficiaries, help to provide local focus and consider varied funding streams and support aspirations.”

Advantages associated with being a community business were largely around local support and ownership, drawing in resources and being seen as something positive by funders. There was also a sense that being a community business might help in attracting wider skills sets and different people and that it could be advantageous in securing contracts.

Disadvantages associated with being a community business were around the negative perceptions in the community – where business is linked with money and profit and not being charitable. This was compounded by the confusion of terms amongst the general public in relation to social enterprise, business and community enterprise etc.

Challenges and barriers

When asked about the key challenges and barriers facing organisations respondents cited the following challenges:

“No experience, lack of time.”

“Age (old) of committee members. Unwillingness of younger people to take on responsibilities.”

“Having a group of committed volunteers instead of relying on two or three stalwarts.”

“Our main challenge is raising enough income to have a paid member of staff to co-ordinate activities.”

“We do not have the volunteer resources to be trading.”

Reliance on a small cohort of ageing volunteers, difficulties attracting new and younger members and volunteers, ensuring sufficient income for the upkeep of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings and the high maintenance costs associated with these old buildings and facilities were also identified as challenges.

Interviewees in North Yorkshire cited governance issues as a major barrier, as many organisations were unincorporated registered charities and are therefore not currently able to trade at the perceived levels required for community business. Additional barriers identified included: apathy and resistance to change; reliance on already stretched volunteers and the ability to attract additional members; community suspicions relating to community business and risk aversion.

Opportunities

Respondents were asked to identify the key opportunities and challenges facing their organisations and how these might be overcome. Greater numbers of challenges than opportunities were identified and few suggestions as to how these could be overcome. However, respondents identified the following opportunities:

“Scope of uses for this facility.”

“Promoting the hall as a venue for parties/wedding parties etc and for business training sessions or small conferences.”

“We are hoping to use parts of the building previously not used and this will give us an opportunity to further develop our social impact.”

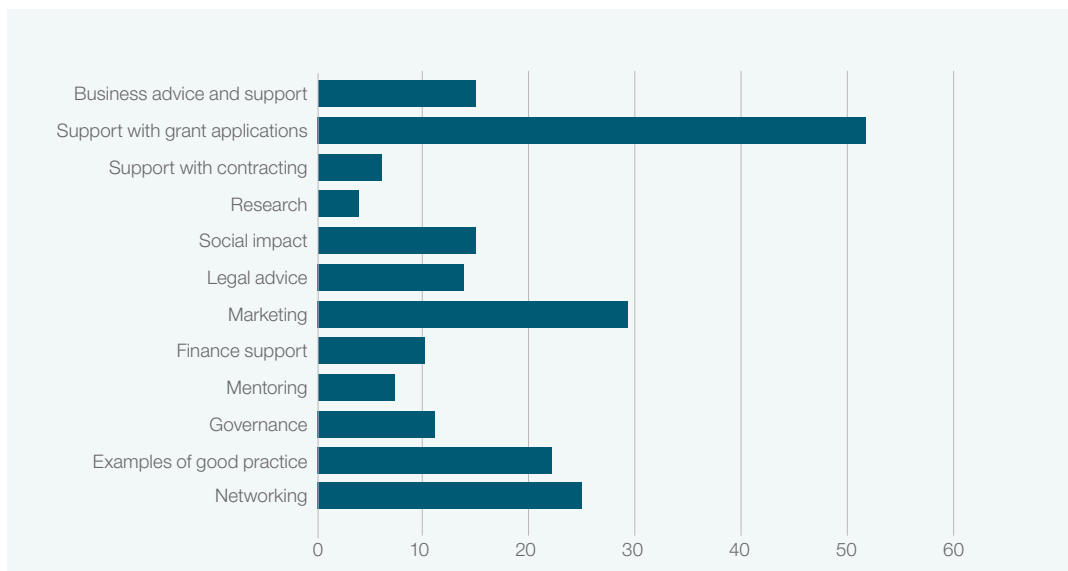
“Increase the use of the village hall by expanding the existing range of events.”

“Finding a trading niche that does not impinge on existing businesses in a small village.”

Support needs

Table 3 above shows the most common support areas identified by respondents included: Support with grant applications (usually relating to large capital refurbishments for premises); marketing to further promote their activities and attract new and more users and networking and good practice to learn from other similar organisations.

Table 3: Support needs



The majority of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings across both geographical areas felt well supported and networked. It was clear from discussions with interviewees that organisations did not know where to go for support with community business. Where likely support organisations were mentioned, local intelligence and experience reveals that these organisations may not necessarily be the right ones to provide community business support.

Staff and volunteer skills sets

47%

(N. 37) of respondents told us that they felt equipped to develop as a community business, with the diverse skills set of trustees, active management committees and support from either CFY or DCA most frequently mentioned.

Of the 53% (N. 41) of survey respondents who did not feel equipped to develop as community business. Common reasons given included:

“No experience, lack of time.”

“We will need help with further developing our income generating potential to increase our sustainability.”

“No, I do not feel the support is there at the moment to help us.”

“We are very aware that there are lots of things we could be doing but lack the expertise. I feel that we muddle through a lot of the time, unsure what to charge for hire, how to develop use, how to manage space re: bookings, cleaning etc. Just keep going.”

“Don’t think I have or other committee members know enough about what to do.”

70%

Of the 50 organisations interviewed (N. 35) believed they had the right mix of skills and experience on their current committees to move their organisations forward.

“... run mainly by volunteers with 2.5 members of staff and a £1.4 million turnover per year. People give their time for free, but it is hard to find volunteers in rural areas with the particular skills needed.”

“Apart from the trustees we have a growing number of supporters and people who are happy to help with their time, skills and knowledge. We are happy to do any training that comes up to help us to understand more about our roles and how to run the hall efficiently and profitably.”

“We have a wonderful board of trustees. Professional people with a massive range of skills. There is a good age range. Our only worry is succession.”

Whereas 18% (N. 9) thought they might have and 12% (N. 6) said they did not have the right skills sets within the leadership teams. Rurality, capacity and recruiting the right kind of new trustees were all given as reasons for these responses.

The majority of stakeholders and business support providers felt that the skill-set and expertise needed for running community business was a real challenge in communities, especially in deprived wards. As a result, most interviewees felt that one or two individuals were usually the driving force behind a community business and not the community in general – ‘entrepreneurs are born not made’. Similarly, anecdotal evidence from Community First Yorkshire and Durham Community Action would point towards boards and committees having their own cultures which might not always be conducive to attracting more diverse membership and achieving change. The extent to which organisations used skills audits was patchy and reflected the divergent phases of development amongst organisations surveyed and interviewed.

Almost all the village halls, rural community hubs and buildings surveyed and interviewed were volunteer-led and run organisations, with an older age demographic of committee members and volunteers involved. Historically their focus has been on maintaining their often very old buildings/community assets. These key individuals donate considerable voluntary hours and are extensively ‘plugged in’ to their local communities and bring with them significant social and community capital. However, they tend not to be connected to the wider operating and policy environment of the Third Sector.

4. Discussion

To quote the often-cited words of the late Jo Cox (MP) 'We have more in common than that which divides us'. This was certainly true in terms of the research findings across North Yorkshire and Durham Dales. Notable differences included: the different local government structures (North Yorkshire has a County Council structure and a team of Stronger Communities Managers who operate at District level, whereas Durham Dales operates an Area Action Partnerships participatory local government model in addition to County Council services); vastly different levels of understanding and knowledge about community business and Power to Change amongst Business Support Providers and Stakeholders (these being widely known about and understood in Durham Dales, and the opposite being true in North Yorkshire).

The number of village halls and rural community hubs and buildings that qualify as community business

64% (N. 54) of survey respondents and 52% (N. 26) of interviewees claimed they would satisfy Power to Change's four tests of community business. This is considerably greater than the 9% estimated by the Community Business Market 2016 report (Hull *et al* 2016). These percentages are taken from the interviews and online survey respectively and rely on respondent's self-determination/identification once they understood the four tests. The different levels of understanding and the explanations given by organisations as to how they satisfy these four tests must be taken into account, but even allowing for some failing to satisfy certain aspects, most notably around organisations' ability to evidence the broad community impact test, we believe this would still be much greater than the previous 9% estimate.

Almost all organisations surveyed online and interviewed were locally rooted and able to delineate the local communities they served. The vast majority generated their income primarily through letting space within their facilities, although they did always regard this as a trading activity. A small number were grant reliant and where grants had been received these were usually associated with capital building developments. The vast majority believed they delivered broad community impact, but very few organisations meaningfully captured and reported on this in formal and systematic ways. Similarly, most believed they were accountable to the communities they served through their membership and governance models, but relatively few regularly undertook community consultations and surveys.

The term 'community business'

Our findings reveal that the term 'community business' was not widely used, understood, acceptable or even liked. It was not a term that made sense to many of those interviewed or surveyed. Whilst some accepted that they were a community business, they said it was not a term they would use to describe their organisations. 17% (N. 13) of online survey respondents had no idea what a 'community business' was and of the remaining 73% (N.64) who volunteered a description, none of these were able to fully describe it using Power to Change's four tests. It is fair to say that the vast majority of online survey respondents and interviewees grasped the notion of community business being run by and for the local community, but trading for social purposes and broad community impact were less well understood or reported aspects.

There was general antipathy towards the term amongst those surveyed online and interviewed because they thought it would communicate the wrong messages about their organisations, such as having a focus on being profit driven with paid directors, being seen as less charitable and because the local community would not understand what it was. The inclusion of the word 'business' was not liked because of perceived trustee benefits and changing perceptions around the organisations no longer being charitable.

'Community business' as a label or brand met with a far warmer reception amongst Business Support Providers and Stakeholder organisations. In North Yorkshire, only those from within the Third Sector had any real understanding of the term community business and had heard of Power to Change. Of those who were not familiar with the term, they tended to like it because of its perceived associated benefits/connotations in terms of being professional and business-like organisations.

During the research it became apparent that village halls, rural community hubs and buildings do not tend to see themselves or identify with the wider Third Sector ecology and may therefore miss out on the wider issues and debates taking place within the sector. This in part, may be explained by the ageing demographics of board members and the dominant volunteer-run nature of the organisations – resulting in time and capacity issues impacting on wider engagement. It may also explain why outcomes, impact and community business were little understood terms.

Perceived advantages and disadvantages with community business branding

There was a different take on the perceived advantages and disadvantages associated with community business branding. Business support providers and stakeholder organisations preferred the term and were able to identify more advantages than disadvantages. Whereas village halls, rural community hubs and buildings foresaw more disadvantages. This was in large part due to the characteristics (positive and negative) that both groups ascribed to the term to ensure that the community is on board.

Advantages cited by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings related to potential contracting, finance and funding opportunities, whereas business support providers and stakeholders often cited opportunities to plug gaps left by public sector retrenchment and potential grant funding from Power to Change.

Disadvantages cited by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings related to not liking the term, thinking it was not a suitable description for their organisations, the potential for it to discourage local people's involvement because of associations with private profit and the subsequent loss of volunteers, losing donations because of the 'business' association and not being seen as being charitable.

The current lack of awareness and misconceptions around community business evident from this research may mean that organisations are inadvertently discounting themselves from becoming engaged in Power to Change or pursuing support from elsewhere. There was a sense that using the label community business (if appropriate) was not an either/or option.

There needs to be further awareness raising to enhance people's understanding of the term community business amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, Local Enterprise Partnerships, public sector bodies and other infrastructure support agencies. The use of appropriate language when working with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings is pertinent, and this is particularly the case around such terms as trading and profit. These were not terms used by those surveyed online or interviewed – their preference being for generating income and surpluses.

Opportunity and necessity factors leading to community business development

Given the low levels of understanding and awareness of community business, this was a challenging topic for the respondents and interviewees. Our findings are therefore inconclusive in terms of whether opportunity or necessity factors are the main influencers for village halls, rural community hubs and buildings becoming or wanting to become community businesses. However, there is some (albeit very little) evidence to support opportunity factors influencing organisations' moves towards becoming community business. A handful of organisations thought that being a community business might improve their chances of winning contracts, attracting different funding, accessing support and attracting greater community support, but these did not appear to be main drivers for them. Similarly of those organisations who expressed an interest in pursuing community business as a model for their future development, this was framed as being part of their future planning and sustainability, diversification of income and activities. A smaller number of organisations cited necessity factors influencing their decisions to pursue becoming a community business, such as the closure of the local post office, shop and pub and withdrawal of services in rural areas.

The day-to-day operational focus for the vast majority of the organisations surveyed and interviewed clearly impacts on their capacity to undertake strategic planning and serious consideration of community business models. This is understandable given their reliance on volunteers. Their focus was on maintaining the fabric of their buildings, keeping their facilities in a good state of repair, managing current bookings and users and ensuring sufficient income to cover their costs. It is therefore not surprising that many struggled to address this question in meaningful ways. So, we are not therefore able to draw conclusions on whether opportunity or necessity factors are contributing to organisations considering community business model developments.

Business support providers and stakeholder organisations anticipated more opportunities largely in relation to potential market gaps resulting from austerity, public sector cuts and communities doing things for themselves. For instance,

“Transforming communities in terms of power and influence. Opportunities afforded through the retraction of public services which creates a vacuum which needs filling.”

“Renewable Energy and micro renewable energy schemes in North Yorkshire. Electric cars. Creative solutions to public services and buildings e.g. Museums, Libraries, Community Buildings. Potential for a crop of new work around early intervention and prevention with families and individuals – creative collaborations with partnerships and LAs embedded”

It should be noted that these are opportunities were difficult to translate into real, tangible, contracts and opportunities that local community businesses could take advantage of.

Further work needs to be undertaken to raise awareness about Power to Change and community business with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings to stimulate the pipeline. Similarly, this is the case with key stakeholder, gateway and support organisations across sectors whose levels of understanding were also low.

To achieve a significant step change amongst those organisations who have expressed an interest in knowing more about community business and who might therefore constitute pipeline organisations, we believe there would need to be a Transition Support Programme targeted at village halls, rural community hubs and buildings. This would serve to raise aspirations within organisations, give them the confidence to try different things, share best practice and provide realistic achievable role models, so that organisations could learn from others who are similar to them.

This would help organisations to: build capacity and resilience; address the perceived negative associations of community business in the wider community; develop and articulate strategic/business plans; understand how to undertake and analyse community consultations; manage, monitor, measure and report on broad community impact; encourage the wider use of skills audits to aid board diversification and; attract new members and volunteers.

Support and networks

Across both geographies, organisations largely reported feeling supported and networked and the most often cited support organisations were: Community First Yorkshire or Durham Community Action, local District Councils, Area Action Partnerships, North Yorkshire Stronger Communities Team and village hall networks or consortium. A significant number also listed their own discrete networks, social capital or peer-to-peer partners.

Challenges and barriers

The most frequently cited challenges were the lack of capacity, time and skills to both develop and grow their organisations. This was because of their reliance on relatively small cohorts of ageing volunteers. The recruitment of new and additional younger volunteers and members was also a key challenge facing many organisations.

Barriers to developing or growing a community business included: lack of finance and funding; lack of skills and expertise; perceived negative connotations amongst the wider community with the potential loss of volunteers; governance issues relating to legal forms, incorporation and trading levels; rurality, limited markets and customer numbers.

The above barriers and challenges affected the establishment of a community business. However, the brand 'community business' as previously mentioned was not widely understood, used or liked amongst those surveyed and interviewed. Even when the four criteria were explained and understood, there was a reluctance to use the term or apply it to their organisations. This would suggest that further work around raising awareness and branding for community business needs to take place.

Appetite to transition and indicative timescales

As previously mentioned despite the term 'community business', not been widely understood, used or liked by the cohort of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings surveyed and interviewed, there was an appetite amongst those who did not consider themselves to already be a community business to explore this further. 36% (N. 20) of those interviewed said either yes or possibly when asked if they would be interested in exploring community business further. Similarly, 31% (N. 11) of online survey respondents said the same. Whilst saying and doing are different things, this relatively healthy pipeline merits further investigation and support.

This research process has raised the profile of both community business and Power to Change amongst those surveyed and interviewed across the two geographies. Many felt that to transition to being a community business would call for a change in the mind-set or replacement of trustees/volunteers/directors and that this new way of working would take time to embed.

Initially, only 9% of those surveyed online identified themselves as a community business, this rose to 64% when Power to Change's four tests were explained. Inevitably some of these self-identifying organisations might not fully satisfy Power to Change's four tests and should therefore be included in any transitioning figures. However, it is not possible to accurately predict these at this stage. 36% of online survey respondents said they would be interested in exploring Community Business further. Furthermore, 52% of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings interviewed said they would describe themselves as a community business once they understood the term and a further 20% (N. 5) expressed an interest in knowing more.

In conclusion we would estimate that the percentage of those consulted with an appetite to transition might be between 20–40%. which is significantly higher than initially anticipated. Any future support offer for transitioning organisations would need to be flexible, locally accessible and transformational. Consideration could be given to developing a programme of support to recruit a new cohort of volunteers, for a time limited and project focussed activity – who were interested in understanding and exploring community business opportunities and developments with their village halls, rural community hubs and buildings. These cohorts could be tasked and supported to undertake community business feasibility studies for consideration. Any such support offer should be locally provided through trusted organisations, this being one of the favoured options identified through this research.

Social value and impact reporting

Clearly the work of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings has considerable broad community impact. All of those consulted were inclusive organisations, open to all and looking to benefit everyone in their communities. The vast majority of those interviewed and surveyed felt that they had broad community impact, but few were truly able to evidence this. None had undertaken any formal monitoring or measurement

of social impact or broader community impact. Most evidence was anecdotal. Village halls, rural community hubs and buildings clearly have some way to go in terms of understanding, measuring and reporting on impact. Very few had heard of the Social Value Act. Some organisations in Durham did measure activities and social effects, but nothing that could be formally classed as social impact measurement and reporting.

Consideration could be given to the development of a bespoke framework and toolkit for use by village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, alongside the provision of training workshops to enable the capturing, measuring, recording and reporting of community impact. This should incorporate elements of Theory of Change and definitions for inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

A funded pilot to work with a handful of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings to evidence and report on the social value and impact of these types of organisations to feed into the development of the above toolkit is recommended – e.g. an action research project.

The role of key individuals in transformation

The research teams' extensive experience of supporting village halls, rural community hubs and buildings suggests that the role of key individuals is critical to the successful stewardship of these organisations. Very few organisations in this research undertook business or strategic planning work. The research pointed to: an older age group of those involved; organisational reliance on volunteers; limited capacity and time and; a focus on day-to-day operational issues. There may however, be some opportunities to tap into wider community interest resulting from public sector cuts and the withdrawal of services, which may attract new players into these organisations – although little evidence suggests this is the case at present. Attracting the right people was a key theme throughout responses and younger people, new people, more people and those with business experience were recognised as very important.

Raising aspirations within community organisations to try different things could be achieved through sharing good practice via networks and case studies. Additionally, as previously mentioned, support with undertaking skills audits, training for existing and new volunteers/trustees and assistance with organisational development, business planning and strategic reviews to define route maps and to embed change could be considered. All of which could be incorporated into a bespoke support offer, allied to the feasibility studies, community business awareness raising, and transitioning support mentioned earlier.

Consideration could also be given to providing succession planning support for village halls, rural community hubs and buildings linked to the development of community business – ensuring these organisations and facilities are fit for purpose, respond to changing needs and fit for the 21st Century and beyond.

If more organisations are enabled and supported to undertake community consultations, this might result in identifying unmet needs, particularly amongst those sections of local communities not currently using the facilities, which in turn could attract new and more diverse volunteers.

5. Conclusion

Percentage of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings as community business

64% of online respondents and 52% of those interviewed self-identified as a community business using Power to Change's four qualifying criteria. This is considerably greater than the previous 9% estimate in Hull *et al* (2016).

The term 'community business'

Knowledge of Power to Change and the term 'community business' was extremely low. The term 'community business' was not widely used, understood or liked. The term was not felt to be appropriate, for fears of alienating the local community, losing volunteers, being perceived to be all about profit and making payments to directors.

Perceived advantages and disadvantages of community business branding

Despite concerns, the perceived advantages of being a community business included: having local support and ownership that could draw-in resources; being seen as something positive by funders; potentially attracting a wider set of people with more diverse skill sets that could be an advantage for the organisation, as a means of keeping something going such as a shop, retaining a local service such as post office and as a condition for going for a contract.

Disadvantages associated with being a community business included: negative perceptions associated with the term and potential misunderstandings amongst community members and organisations no longer being seen to be charitable.

Challenges and barriers to establishing or growing as a community business

Challenges and barriers most frequently reported by organisations wanting to grow or develop into a community business were the lack of capacity, time and skills, usually because of their reliance on relatively small cohorts of ageing volunteers. Recruiting new and younger members was also a key challenge.

Potential pipeline and indicative timescales

There is a healthy pipeline of organisations interested in exploring community business – 36% of those interviewed and 31% of online survey respondents. It was not possible to outline an indicative timescale for pipeline organisations, given their wide range of support needs.

Timeframes would be dependent on any local support offer, the pace at which organisations were happy to move and the not insignificant changes in mind-sets amongst some individuals, their boards and communities.

Support and networks

Village halls, rural community hubs and buildings reported feeling supported with their everyday needs, but many identified inappropriate contacts for community business support. There was confusion and a lack of clarity across the two geographies as to who is and should be providing support for community business. There was a dearth of business support across North Yorkshire and when available, it was generic and transactional in nature, largely web based and with a seemingly private sector focus. There is a need for both clarity in terms of who is responsible for providing support to extant or emerging community business across both patches, and for associated resources to be made available to do so.

Social value and impact reporting

There was limited understanding of the term 'broad community impact' and how to evidence and report on this. This is therefore an area that village halls, rural community hubs and buildings need support with.

The role of key individuals in transformation

The role of key individuals is critical to the successful stewardship of community business. Research shows that most organisations are reliant on a small cohort of volunteers, with limited capacity and time to focus on developing their organisation and on succession planning. Key individuals link organisations to their local communities in terms of accountability, credibility and identifying unmet needs. Finding these key individuals is a particular challenge in rural areas due to geography, population size and individual's capacity to volunteer. Organisational change, or the lack of it, was seen as being down to these key individuals.

6. Recommendations

To support, the larger than anticipated, latent and potential future pipeline of community business from amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, consideration should be given to the following three recommendations:

- Further awareness raising to enhance people’s understanding of the term ‘community business’ amongst village halls, rural community hubs and buildings, Local Enterprise Partnerships, public sector bodies, other infrastructure support agencies and the wider public. The use of appropriate and community-friendly language when working with village halls, rural community hubs and buildings is pertinent, and this is particularly the case around trading.
- A funded pilot to work with a handful of village halls, rural community hubs and buildings to evidence and report on their social value and impact. This could feed into the development of a bespoke framework/toolkit for their use, alongside the provision of training workshops.
- Development of a future support offer for transitioning organisations that is flexible, locally accessible and transformational. Consideration could be given to develop a programme of support to recruit a new cohort of volunteers, for time-limited and project-focussed activity, who want to explore community business opportunities and developments with their village halls, rural community hubs and buildings. They could be tasked with and supported to undertake community business feasibility studies for consideration.

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Appendix A:

Online survey for village halls, rural community hubs and buildings

Name:		Organisation:	
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1. Please select how you describe your organisation/group (you can select more than one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Charity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Building
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Enterprise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Village Hall
<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary group	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Community Hub
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state what)

2. What do you understand by the term 'Community Business'?

It would be helpful for us to know a little detail about your organisation/group, please support your answers with some explanation in the spaces provided:

3. Is your organisation/group locally rooted in a particular geographical community and responding to its needs?

YES	NO	If yes, please tell us where and how	
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4. Does your organisation/group trade for the benefit of the local community? Does the majority of your income come from things like renting out space in a building, trading as café, selling produce or services, or generating energy)?

YES	NO	If yes, please provide some details	
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5. Is your organisation/group accountable to the local community?

YES	NO	If yes please explain how?	
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6. Does your organisation/group have broad community impact (benefit and impact upon the community as a whole)?

YES	NO	If yes please tell us how you know and record this	
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The four criteria set out above in Questions 3-6 – locally rooted, trading for the benefit of the local community, accountable to local community and broad community impact – are used to define a community business. Power to Change believe there are many types of community business, what they have in common is that they are accountable to their community and that the profits they generate deliver positive local impact.

7. Having read these criteria would you now describe your organisation/group as a community business?

YES	NO	Please explain your response	
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8. If No, do you think your organisation/group might be interested in exploring being a community business in the future?

YES	NO	Tell us why	
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9. Do you feel equipped to develop your organisation as a community business?

YES	NO	Please explain your response	
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10. What are the key opportunities and challenges facing your organisation and how might these be overcome?

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11. Do you feel your organisation is supported and well networked?

YES	NO	Please give details and name any the supporting group(s), organisation(s), network(s)	
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1. Please select how you describe your organisation/group (you can select more than one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Business advice and support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marketing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grant application advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentoring
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support with contracting and tendering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examples of good practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	Networking opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please detail:

If you are happy to be contacted in the future, please tick the box below

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix B:

Business support provider and stakeholder interview aide memoire

Introductory Preamble

Thank you for agreeing to this semi structured interview. I am part of a team that won a contract from the Power to Change Research Institute to better understand the size, scale, scope, potential growth and future pipeline of Community Businesses from amongst Community Buildings, Village Halls and Rural Community Hubs.

Power to Change is an independent charitable trust, set up with a £150 million endowment fund from the Big Lottery to deliver a ten-year programme to support, develop, grow and learn about Community Businesses across England.

We have partnered with our sister organisation in (Yorkshire/Durham) to undertake parallel research covering North Yorkshire and Durham Dales and will be producing reports and delivering workshops to present our findings in the future.

We just have a few discussion areas...

1. Can you tell me what do you understand by the term Community Business?

(Prompt: Community Businesses are a sub set of the wider social enterprise sector and Power to Change uses four tests to identify Community Businesses –Locally rooted: They are rooted in a particular geographical place and respond to its needs. Trading for the benefit of the local community: They are businesses. Their income comes from things like renting out space in their buildings, trading as cafés, selling produce they grow or generating energy; Accountable to the local community: They are accountable to local people, for example through a community shares offer that creates members who have a voice in the business's direction and Broad community impact: They benefit and impact their local community as a whole. They often morph into the hub of a neighbourhood, where all types of local groups gather, for example to access broadband or get training in vital life skills)

2. Do you differentiate between Community Businesses and Social Enterprises in the support you currently provide?

(Prompts: Do they take any particular legal forms, serve particular communities; can they be for private profit or not for private profit?)

3. Have you provided support for any Community Businesses in the past? If so, what form did this take and who accessed the support and what do they do?

(Prompts: Funding, business planning, investment, mentoring/coaching, signposting etc)

4. Can you think of any advantages or disadvantages for organisations identifying themselves as Community Businesses?

(Prompts Advantages in terms of aspirations, direction of travel, disadvantages in terms of funding from charitable trusts and foundations – disengaging certain sections of the community, people not understanding the term)

5. What do you think are the opportunities/markets for Community Businesses, both now and in the future? Why do you say this?

(Prompts: Attracting local volunteers to supplement service delivery/activities; community asset transfer opportunities; co-production with the public sector; safeguarding buildings from falling into disrepair; ensuring services continue to be delivered in new and different ways; opportunities to diversify funding and become less dependent on grants; rooted in local communities to ensure sustainability)

6. Thinking about your role and remit, what types of support are you able to offer/provide Community Businesses?

(Prompts: Grants; business development support, coaching, mentoring, awareness raising, signposting, brokerage)

7. Is providing support to Community Businesses or Social Enterprises a measurable output for your organisation?

8. What do you think are the key issues and barriers facing Community Hubs, Village Halls and Rural Community Hubs in terms of transitioning to becoming Community Businesses. Do you have any suggestions as to how these might be overcome?

(Prompts: Awareness, governance and personalities, risk aversion, unwillingness to change, stuck in the old ways of doing things, demand)

Appendix C: Village halls, rural community buildings and hubs interview aide memoire

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to this semi structured interview. I am part of a team that won a contract from the Power to Change Research Institute to better understand the size, scale, scope, potential growth and future pipeline of Community Businesses.

Power to Change is an independent charitable trust, set up with a £150 million endowment fund from the Big Lottery to deliver a ten-year programme to support, develop, grow and learn about Community Businesses across England.

We have partnered with our sister organisation in (Yorkshire/Durham) to undertake this research and will be producing reports and delivering workshops to present our findings in the future.

We just have a few discussion areas...

1. Would you say your organisation is rooted in a particular geographical community and responding to its need? If so which one and how?

2. Where does the majority of your organisation's income come from?

(Prompts: generated income from selling services, hiring out space, organising and delivering paid for activities e.g. cinema nights, classes, plays and performances, or from grants, community fundraising, contracts, donations)

3. Is your organisation accountable to the community it serves? If so how?

(Prompts: membership, annual surveys, consultation events, community shares)

4. Does your organisation make a positive impact on your community? If so, how do you record this?

(Prompts: Theory of Change, Impact framework and management, annual surveys, case studies, feedback, monitoring reports)

5. What do you understand by the term 'Community Business'?

(Prompts: Power to change describes Community Business as organisations set up and led by local people to look after what matters to them. Any profits made flow back to deliver positive local impact. Community businesses deliver many different types of services and activities, for instance they could be shops, farms, pubs or call centres, among many other types of business. In essence community businesses:

- Are locally rooted in a particular geographical place.
- Trade for the benefit of the local community – the majority of their income from trading e.g. letting out space, rather than from grants.

- Are accountable to the local community and can demonstrate community involvement
- They positively benefit and impact on their community as a whole – broad community impact

As such community businesses can be shops, farms, pubs or call centres, among many other types of business.

6. Would you describe your organisation as a Community Business? If not, why not?

7. Can you see any advantages or disadvantages with identifying your organisation as a community business? If so what are they?

(Prompts Advantages in terms of aspirations, direction of travel, disadvantages in terms of funding from charitable trusts and foundations – disengaging certain sections of the community, people not understanding the term)

8. Who does your organisation go to for support? Which networks are you involved in? Are there any gaps in provision?

9. Do you think there is an appetite/desire within your organisation to either become a community business or to explore this further? Why do you say this?

(Prompts: Taking advantage of opportunities, funding, investment, joint working etc. Attracting local volunteers to supplement service delivery/activities; community asset transfer opportunities; co-production with the public sector; safeguarding buildings from falling into disrepair; ensuring services continue to be delivered in new and different ways; opportunities to diversify funding and become less dependent on grants; rooted in local communities to ensure sustainability)

10. What would be the key challenges for your organisation in becoming a community business? How might these be overcome?

(Prompts: Awareness, governance, personalities, risk aversion, unwillingness to change, stuck in the old ways of doing things, demand)

11. Do you know where to go to get support with developing your community business ideas?

(Prompts: Opportunities, funding, business planning, investment, mentoring/coaching, signposting etc)

12. Does your current Board of Directors/Trustees have the right mix of skills and experience to move your organisation forward?

(Prompts: Training, mentoring/coaching, new recruitments, entrepreneurial personalities, change management)

Appendix D:

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Kirkby Malzeard Mechanics Institute

Gathered by:



Background information

Kirkby Malzeard is a village North Yorkshire, 15 miles north of Harrogate. Kirby Malzeard Mechanics Institute (KMMI) was originally built in 1852 as a Mechanics Institute to support education and learning amongst mechanics and working people. It now operates as the Village Hall. Located in the centre of the village, the building two rooms at the front which comprise a small meeting room and a room for letting. Until recently this room was used for a part time doctors' surgery which brought in an income. KMMI plans to create a community café in this space in their next phase of development.

There is a new and well fitted kitchen, new toilets and wash areas and a bar area which is very popular with local residents. The main hall is large and well decorated and has a stage. Further rooms include a modern annexe which is used for meetings and IT training. In addition, the Mechanics Institute has its own snooker and billiards hall with two full size tables for which membership costs £15 per year. There are currently over 40 members. There is no car park, but plenty of on street parking.

Kirkby Malzeard has a population of just 885 people, 50% male and 50% female, spread across 375 households. Housing comprises a mix of terrace, semi-detached and detached properties, the majority of homes are owned, some are privately rented, and a few are in housing association ownership.

There are 185 children under the age of 16 in the village or 21% of the population and higher than the average for England of 19%. There are 480 adults of working age, with very low unemployment, a high percentage of self-employment and people working from home in the village. There are 220 people aged over 65 or 25% of the population this is higher than the average for England of 16.3%. People from black or minority ethnic groups or people born outside the UK is relatively small at 3% and 3% respectively.

The hall is regularly booked by 30 organisations and has proven to be a popular venue for parties, plays, musical evenings and the annual panto. Activities include exercise classes (yoga, pilates, Body Blitz, junior football), classes for toddlers, reception and junior players and a mother and toddler group which is well attended. They have a very active water colour group and a traditional handicrafts group. There is a Tuesday lunch club, mostly attended by older people in the village, many of whom live alone as well as an Asperger support group which meets regularly. WI meetings and adult education classes also take place at the Mechanics Institute.

Trading and income generation

The committee works hard throughout the year to organise lots of events and activities and are constantly looking for new ideas that generate an income. Last year they organised quiz nights, plays, concerts, Halloween disco for teenagers, started a monthly Friday night is Music Night, a village Brunch on the first Sunday of each month and Fishy Friday nights (fish supper on a Friday night) and a monthly cinema night. Wine tasting is popular, and the Pantomime is a village institution.

Their income comes from hiring the hall and from holding events and the bar has been a very good income generator. They will in the future be applying for grant funding for capital projects.

Profits are used to maintain the building, put on new events and any surplus/profits is used for the new work and refurbishment work planned to start later this year. They plan to create a larger bar area and start a community café. The café will be to be a separate business, run by a private individual who will hire the café from the Institute. This provide a small business opportunity for a local person. This will provide an income for the Institute but will not require them to be involved in the day to day running of the business.

They are a registered unincorporated charity established in 1852. They do not employ any staff and manage everything with volunteers, they do not anticipate employing staff in the near future.

Community impact

KKMI are currently undertaking community consultation to find out what people like and enjoy doing at the hall and what they would like to do but which is not currently available. The trustees plan to hold an open morning and send a questionnaire to all households. They are increasingly using social media and have an active Facebook page which is reaching younger people in the village. The feedback from this, as well as from asking hall users about their experiences. They collect the numbers attending events and keep a record of volunteer hours donated.

All residents are invited to the annual AGM and the Chairman's annual report and the financial report are all available. They feel that they are approachable and that they listen to the community and within reason try to meet requests and local needs. They do not collect information or data which would enable them to measure community impact. They do some evaluation following events and plan to do more, currently they base their impact on the numbers of people attending events and classes and on anecdotal evidence.

Future plans

The committee is producing a new business plan to cover the next three years, and this will include the planned community café project and an action plan has been completed for the project. They access support from a number of organisations. The committee is made up of 14 active trustees who sit on their management board. They do consider themselves to be a community business, they all understand the need to run the charity in a business-like manner and the importance of making a profit each year in order to meet their costs, carry out maintenance work on the building and buy new equipment, develop new ideas and events and to build a pot of money for the new refurbishment of the bar area and community café. They take their responsibilities very seriously and are very committed to the charitable aims of the charity and profit is made as a result of carrying out those aims and not as a means in itself.

They have a very good mix of skills and experience on the committee. They access support from Community First Yorkshire and Harrogate and Ripon Community Voluntary Service, they are active members of the Harrogate District community buildings network. The challenges they recognise are:

- **Lack of funding and the ability to raise funds** – a mix of fund raising and grants.
- **Governance** – the current governing document may not be appropriate for any future business development as the charitable aims may preclude this. However, if they develop ideas and let the building to local business as they plan to do with the café then this is not a problem.
- **Ownership** – because the Mechanics Institute is a membership organisation, it is owned by the members not by the community and this may be an issue if they wanted to develop more business practices.
- **Local politics** – they recognise that there could be an issue with how more business development might be perceived by the community and would not wish to alienate the villagers, they would not want anyone to be suspicious of their motives.
- **Risk** – as an unincorporated charity the trustees would not want to put themselves under financial risk.

Case Study 2: Bishopdale & Beverley Memorial Hall

Gathered by:



Background information

Pateley Bridge is a small market town in Nidderdale in the Borough of Harrogate, North Yorkshire. There are schools for children up to 16, a doctors' surgery, dentist and a good range of shops, cafes and pubs. The Memorial Hall is situated in the heart of Pateley Bridge and was built to honour the fallen of the two world wars. Pateley Bridge's population is 1430 spread across 685 households, with an above average number of single pensioner holders.

There is a large main hall, with a stage and balcony, a separate meeting room and a smaller room which can be used as a dressing room, breakout/seminar room. There is also a large kitchen which is leased to North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) to prepare and cook school meals for the area. There is no car park. They are a registered charity and their governing document is a conveyance dated June 1946. They collect attendance records for the film nights but do not gather other feedback or carry out community consultation or surveys. This is due to lack of time and energy on the part of the current trustee board who consider their duty is to maintain the building and meet their charitable aims.

Trading and income generation

Currently the hall is booked for weekly tea dances, band practices and choir practices, the local orchestra rehearses in the Hall and a young theatre group of aspiring actors hires it to rehearse and develop their acting skills.

The hall is large and can cater for large parties, concerts, dances. They introduced Film Nights a few years ago and this has been very successful, they have a regular audience of 100 people of all ages, drawing people not only from Pateley Bridge but from the surrounding isolated villages. The committee have a number of volunteers who collect elderly and disabled people, so they can attend film shows. They run the bar at all events which is very popular.

Their income comes from hiring the hall and from holding events and the bar has been a very good income generator. About one third of their income comes from North Yorkshire County Council who lease the hall to the local primary school for school lunches on an annual contract. One third of their income comes from general lettings and the final third from fund raising and fund-raising events.

They apply for grant funding for capital projects. They are aware of the risk to their income should North Yorkshire County Council not renew the school lunch contract.

Profits are used to maintain the building which is large and now over 50 years old and maintenance costs are a major cost, for example they are building up a reserve to pay for a new roof which will be very expensive and for which currently there is not funding available.

They employ a caretaker who undertakes not only the cleaning but opening the hall, putting the heating on and other tasks as may be required.

Community impact

They do not consider themselves a community business and do not understand how the term could apply to them. They see themselves as a charity committee which runs and maintains a community facility and have no appetite to develop the business or trading side of running the hall. They admit they are not proactive and are risk averse. They do not have a business plan and do not see the need to write one, they do keep good financial records and cash flow budgets.

Future plans

The challenges they recognise are: Funding for capital projects such as replacing the roof which will not be eligible for a grant; Ageing committee trustees with no younger people coming forward to become trustees; Financial risk to trustees should an issue arise; Loss of NYCC contract and how they would replace that income and the layout of the building prevents many activities taking place and the lack of a car park.

Case Study 3: Kelfield Village Institute

Gathered by:



Background information

Kelfield is a small village in the Vale of York, lying just north of Selby. With no school, church or shop, the Village Institute provides a unique and vital role in the community in bringing local people together for a wide variety of activities and events. There are 184 households with a population of 450. The Institute has a new kitchen and toilets, a large main hall which is newly decorated, new windows and a re-sanded and refurbished floor which is now suitable for dancing.

There are 184 households with a population of 450. The Institute is very rooted in the local community and is now well used. It was built in 1924 and is a single brick-built hall with a small car park.

They are currently an unregistered unincorporated charity; their income is now over the charity commission registration threshold and will increase again this financial year. They are considering whether to register as a charity and Vest in the Official Custodian or to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. They have a committee of twelve trustees, although only seven are active.

Trading and income generation

The Institute committee runs a mixture of community activities, fund raising activities, classes and private functions. They run a Saturday morning coffee and book swap, a Friday night Family Night and a quiz night, book theatre nights, film nights and hold a Christmas Fair.

A new committee took charge seven years ago and have brought the Institute back to life. They have carried out a series of refurbishment projects which they have funded through grants and fund raising in the village and have a basic business plan and produce a monthly cash flow forecast.

Community impact

They do consider themselves a community business with charitable aims and manage the Institute in a business-like manner. They focus on providing a warm, welcoming and well-maintained space for the community to use and have a clear idea of how much they need to charge in order to cover costs and build up a surplus. They consult the community annually to find out what they like about the hall, what they would like to do there that is currently not available. They ask for feedback after all events and bookings.

Social media is proving to be a useful marketing tool and they are finding that people are starting to come to events and classes from other villages. The committee recognise that they need to expand their reach if they wish to keep growing and attract more hall users.

The committee currently has people with a good mix of skills and experience to deliver the business plan and develop ideas.

Future plans

They are looking to update their booking system and are exploring the online booking options. They have started online banking as the nearest bank is now a half hour drive away and are looking at how to streamline and modernise their systems. They have a full set of policies and procedures in place.

The challenges they recognise are: Retaining and motivating volunteers; How to get more young people to become involved in the running of events and using the hall and how to get the residents to attend classes and events.

Case Study 4: Wintringham Village Hall

Gathered by:



Background information

The Wintringham Community Hall re-opened in January 2016, replacing a condemned First World War Ex-Army wooden hut. This took a determined and dedicated committee and group of hard working residents fifteen years to achieve. The hall is situated in the small village of Wintringham, near Malton in Ryedale, North Yorkshire. It is a large venue, offering a multi-purpose main hall, a separate meeting room, a well-equipped, large kitchen, disabled access, car park, baby-changing facilities, modern furniture and a west-facing veranda and a large car park.

The population of Wintringham is 205 and there are 80 households in the village, of which 40% are privately rented, often on short term tenancies. Most of this rental property is owned by the local private estate and some is tied accommodation. The land for the hall is leased from the local landowner.

The hall is well used, and a wide range of activities and classes is developing. However, the committee recognise that the village is small and there is a limited number of people to attend these activities, so they are focussing on marketing the hall as a training venue and targeting business and training providers. One training provider has hired the main hall for the next three years.

Trading and income generation

There are regular craft classes, short mats bowling, table tennis, badminton and they are trying to get coffee mornings and hopefully village lunches established. The hall is very popular as venue for parties. They have just taken possession of 6 laptops and a printer and are offering computer sessions to interested villagers at a weekly digital café to help develop computer literacy in the community and to get people popping in to the hall. They are hoping to develop a cinema club and hold monthly films with a bar and food.

Their income comes from hiring the hall and they keep accurate accounts, a monthly cash flow projection and monitor expenditure and income very closely. They are a registered unincorporated charity and have a committee of 11 trustees. They do not employ staff, but should they wish to develop the business hire of the hall they recognise that it would be advisable to have a business manager to market the hall and look after bookings.

Community impact

Since re-opening the hall, the committee have collected feedback from attendees at events and from hirers, they have conducted surveys on satisfaction and ideas for new activities and they have installed a suggestion box in the hall.

Future plans

They do consider that the Community Hall is a community business and needs to be marketed as such to attract hirers and users from outside the village. The current trustee board has a broad range of skills and experience and they are confident about planning and developing in the future but would always welcome more people to help, especially younger people.

The challenges they recognise are:

- Small local population which does have a high turnover of people in the rented houses
- Small number of people willing to become involved as trustees
- Small population to attend events and classes
- Need to market the hall to a wider audience – finding the time and the knowledge to do this
- How to attract more young people to become involved with the committee and running events

Case Study 5: Community House, Ripon

Gathered by:



Background information

This Community House was formerly the Hospital Wing of the old Workhouse. The building was renovated in 2006 and is now run and owned by Ripon Community House Limited – a Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. They promote, incubate and support social economy organisations and public-sector partnership working through the provision of affordable and secure office space complete with broadband and free parking and by offering flexible quality space to hold business and social events, seminars, surgeries, private meetings, workshops, activities/classes and conferences.

By providing this much needed central community facility they are able to ensure delivery of a wide range of services by local organisations for local people such as advice services, provision for young people and support for older people, nursery and crèche facilities, support for families, fitness classes, healthy eating and support with dieting and activities for people with disabilities etc

Community House provides flexible office accommodation and facilities for a number of local charitable organisations such as Age UK, Carers Resource, Dementia Forward, Community Link and Ripon and Rural Wellbeing Services.

Community House has a small but active Board of Trustees and Directors, drawn from the local community. It employs a Business Manager who has access to part time admin and finance staff. An active group of volunteers supports the smooth running of the building. Community House offers a safe environment and facilities for all the community. There is access for people with disabilities to all areas of the building.

The building is open to the general public on weekdays – Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and Friday 9am to 4pm.

Trading and income generation

Community House generates all of its income through trading – from leasing office accommodation and from room hire for various groups, exercise classes, meetings and conferencing.

Community impact

1,400 people come through Ripon Community House doors on a monthly basis to take part in the various activities delivered therein. The building is used by a very wide range of local people ranging from single parents, to young people, to mother and toddler groups, to people with physical and learning disabilities. Outcomes for those using our building and services include improved health and wellbeing, reduced levels of social isolation and loneliness, learning new skills through volunteering, enhanced social networks of support, improved access to services.

Future plans

The Board of Trustees and Directors, alongside the Business Manager are currently undertaking a strategic review of the organisations to feed into future planning. As part of this they are keen to better understand the needs of the local community, so they can better respond to their needs. They are particularly keen to develop youth-based projects. They have previously looked at Power to Change and would like to explore developing as a Community Business in the future and believe they are part way there already.

Case Study 1: The Pinfold Club, Boldron

Gathered by:



Background information

The Pinfold Club is a social club based in the small village of Boldron which offers a space for members and their guests to meet and socialise.

Philip Ryan, Director and Chair of the club, explained that it was set up for the interest of the people of Boldron, initiated by residents in response to the closure of the village pub which shut in January 2017. Boldron is a very rural community with only one bus a day to the nearest town leaving residents feeling isolated.

The club runs in a converted chapel which is leased to the club by its owner. Money to set up the Pinfold Club was loaned by the founding directors on a long-term arrangement. The directors registered as a private company limited by guarantee without share capital in July of the same year.

At present the activity of the club is led by eight company directors and a further 12 volunteers. They do not currently employ staff but hope that the development of the club will enable them to employ staff in the future and support the local community. Income generated will be used to keep the club running.

Trading and income generation

The directors are in the process of applying for a club premises license and currently allow people to bring in their own alcohol and host events such as quiz nights. Local 'pub sports' teams also use the club to meet and compete.

The club also hosts events in the wider community such as the Christmas tree light switch on, BBQ's and other social events.

Once the club premises certificate and a food hygiene certificate are in place, they plan to sell

food and drink as their main source of income along with money raised from room hire. The price of the food and drink will be set at such a price as to cover the running costs of the club which will be approximately £3,000 – £4,000 per year.

Income will also be generated from membership fees which will be around £12 per year.

Community impact

There has not yet been any formal evaluation of the impact to the community, but the club is busy every night it is open, and it is especially valued by those who are new to the village. There is still support for the club in the village on which the directors hope to build.

The Pinfold Club and the village hall are now the only places for villagers to meet and socialise; the directors of the club work closely with the Village Hall and will not accept bookings that would traditionally have gone to the hall.

Future plans

They have an aspirational business plan in place on which they hope to build so that the operation can be made more commercial as the club and its activities develop.

A consultation was undertaken in 2017 to find out what the villagers wanted from the club and they plan on carrying out additional surveys in the future. All members will have a vote at the Annual General Meetings. They also consult informally and will speak to villagers to find out what they want from the club.

The club plans to settle into the community and run as a member led organisation listening to the views of residents and working in partnership with the village hall. They are at the beginning of 'their journey' and if they had to go through the process again, they would do things in a different order but feel nothing is insurmountable.

Case Study 2: Harehope Quarry Project Ltd

Gathered by:



Background information

Harehope Quarry Project was established in 1998 and is rooted in Frosterley in Weardale but serves the whole of County Durham.

Jill Essam, Company Director/Secretary explained that the quarry is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Workers Cooperative.

The project is a nature reserve with permissive and public access. The company manages the nature reserve and smallholding from which it delivers learning projects to schools as part of a 'Learning Outside the Classroom' curriculum.

Courses run by the centre are based around natural materials provided by the quarry, but the venue can also be hired out by individuals and organisations as a centre to meet, run courses, events and activities, and a variety of packages can be negotiated.

The eleven co-op members contribute on a voluntary basis to the running of the organisation along with approximately 100 volunteers. Although the quarry does not employ any staff directly, as contracts come in workers are paid on a self-employed basis for specific direct delivery.

Trading and income generation

The project earns most of its income from work with schools, universities and events. It trades in its space and expertise. Income is also generated from the smallholding by selling produce e.g. meat, charcoal and eggs. The centre has also raised income through grants either for capital projects or revenue generating contracts e.g. environmental led community development contracts from the North Pennines Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) and Durham County Council.

The profits are put back into the organisation to maintain the eco classroom and the nature reserve, to provide match funding and to help the organisation to fulfil its aims and objectives.

Community impact

At present the project consults with its users through surveys and feedback forms as part of any contracted delivery, and consultation has also taken place in the local village through leafleting in the past. They rely on the feedback of the centre users to measure their community impact and gather verbal feedback from the local community as a method of assessing if a particular project or initiative within the nature reserve has been effective.

Future plans

The quarry is finding that its core users do not have the money to allocate in the same way they used to, and this is a challenge to the organisation. They have a development plan as part of their annual reporting and implement this short term strategic vision so that the organisation knows where it is going in the next year.

The organisation finds that there is much less of an appetite for partnership working in the bidding for funding streams and so it is difficult to set up collaborative bids for the shrinking pot of available grants and contracts.

Case Study 3: Frosterley Village Hall

Gathered by:



Background information

Frosterley Village Hall was built by local quarrymen in 1909 for the benefit of the village residents and runs as an unincorporated registered charity.

The village hall is entirely volunteer led and does not employ staff. The trustees do not envisage employing staff as the trustees and a significant number of volunteers support the activities of the hall by giving their time to help benefit the local community.

It serves the Weardale village of Frosterley but attracts people from across County Durham to its fayres and band nights.

Lance Davenport, Treasurer and Anne-Marie Parkin, Trustee explained that there is much activity in the hall including an Art Club, Frosterley Crafters – wool crafts/sewing, Exercise Meet Up (Wellbeing for Life), Yoga, Spinning Group, Bingo, Chung-Do-Kwan, Page turners book club, Tea Dances, Chung-Do-Kwan Little Kickers (for children), Chung-Do-Kwan, Crazy Crafters – (sociable craft group), Breakfast Church (monthly) and Coffee Mornings.

There are craft fayres every three months and a 'Lunch and Sweet' and coffee morning once a month. They hold charity fundraising events such as bands and plays to raise money for the hall. These are the halls own events.

The rooms and hall are available to hire along with the kitchen and bar and are used for birthday parties, christenings, funeral teas, weddings as well as groups.

All of the groups and events held at the hall are for the public and for all ages. Frosterley Primary School joined the hall for their Christmas Fayre.

Trading and income generation

The village hall generates its income from room hire, fundraising, donations and bar trading and has been working hard to fundraise to invest in the hall.

The committee have successfully applied for grants which were used for a specific purpose e.g. a grant from Weardale Area Action Partnership for blinds.

They anticipate next year's income will be increased as they are fundraising to start building work on the old caretakers flat and to bring this into use again as part of the hall.

They have also increased the number of events they hold due to an increase in the number of trustees they now have willing to help out with arranging these.

All profits go back into putting on more events for the local community and maintenance and improvement of the hall.

Community impact

The trustees take care to ensure all the community know about, and are invited to, the AGM; the general public do make their contribution at these public meetings.

The trustees consult with the local community about the type of events and activities by using surveys and questionnaires, but they find that 'word of mouth' in this small community is 'usually best!'

They explained that they usually get feedback verbally about events they hold. They have seen an increase in hall use and event attendance as they ask the community what they would like to see on at the hall. They have also had an increase in trustees of all ages due to the increase in popularity of the hall.

The hall will complete outcomes data where required for specific funding streams such as Weardale Area Action Partnership grants.

Future plans

When planning for the future this volunteer led organisation uses its regular meetings as its planning process. The trustees have an events and fundraising plan for the year where they book in bands, groups, coffee mornings, fayres and fundraising events so they know what they are going to be doing. They do not have a written plan.

The trustees identify advertising as a particular challenge. Many of the trustees work and they find it hard to get posters and leaflets out to the villages.

They explained Facebook has been a great help in advertising, but they still have to remember those who do not use social media which tends to be the older members of the community who do support the hall.

Case Study 4: Teesdale Day Clubs

Gathered by:



Background information/ Legal structure

Teesdale Day Clubs is a membership organisation operating 'day clubs' across Teesdale in County Durham. The model they operate has evolved since 1994 to address social isolation. The club has been running for over 20 years and each locality club uses and supports one of ten local venues by paying them rent from the regular income of the club.

They consider themselves an organisation that is "making a big difference to the lives of local people who are mainly elderly people living alone." The population of the area is around 25,000 with a high percentage of people over 65. The organisation serves the ageing population and the average age of its members is 84.

The concept is based on supporting isolated residents to socialise and maintain their independence. They have 230 members with a 70% attendance rate. They also provide transport and education on subjects such as safety, scams and health.

Each 'Day Club' meets a local need as they are growing or sustaining their memberships. At particular times of the year, the clubs pack as many activities in as possible as they are well aware how lonely some of the members are. They can very often be the only human company some get.

Teesdale Day Clubs have 95 volunteers who support activities at each venue. The clubs are also meeting a social need for many of their volunteers who are elderly but not ready to become members. There is an awareness amongst staff to also be aware of the volunteers needs. The volunteers are retained for extremely long periods as often they do move on to become members.

The Club very much responds to everyone's needs through the Community Support Worker and Club Leaders with support from the volunteers. This can be through providing opportunities for social interaction, signposting, friendship and giving companionship and support, advice and help with day to day living, and where ever possible maintaining independent living for as long as possible. Workers regularly go "the extra mile" to help and support members that may be in distress or require an advocate.

The focus of the work is driven by the needs of the members and retains a local perspective through the support and input of its local volunteers. Each Club runs itself and is very different in its makeup. Some are more financially sustainable, others less so. Some have more vulnerable members or diverse needs.

Annie Dolphin, Trustee believes there is a big difference between Teesdale Day Clubs and a 'lunch club' as the Teesdale Day Clubs provide help for people to manage their day to day living. This early intervention and signposting helps people live in their own homes for longer.

The registered charity is led by a trustee board of seven with 13 staff operating the day clubs. three of the staff are office based but only one is full time, the Community Development Worker. Each Day Club employs a cook and Club Leader.

Trading and income generation

The Trustees would like to grow the organisation but as a grant reliant charity they recognise the risks. They believe that they need to prepare for the future and would welcome support in facing the massive task of trying to ensure sustainability. They know the charity may need to change and adapt but feel unsure about how to approach the challenge.

The income of the charity is reliant on grant funding; the largest of which comes from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities grant. They also make a small charge to members contributions but the charge for the service does not cover everything.

The Club previously had a Service Level Agreement with Durham County Council, but trustees realise this is unlikely to continue. The Trustees are frustrated by increasingly complex landscape of public sector funding and commissioning. They are wary of what they perceive to be 'continuous movement of the goal posts' in the landscape of scarce funding streams from local authorities.

As an organisation they have fairly good unrestricted reserves on which they are maintaining activity, but this will be all gone by 2020. They do also have restricted reserves such as protected redundancy monies.

Community impact

As an organisation they feel rooted in their geographical area and accountable to their community in Teesdale. They have a membership scheme for all those who want to benefit from the Lunch Club.

They hold an AGM and need a percentage of members there. Anyone who has a need can join. They do lots of internal evaluation as a requirement for their Big Lottery grant monitoring and need to identify how the grant is spent. They carry out members surveys every two years and have a Community Worker who will have informal chats that will be used to produce reports and case studies. They produced a Self-Evaluation Report in 2014 and can demonstrate very well what the impact of their work is through the many case studies they have.

The Club Leaders get feedback from members, but this is mostly about activities and they are trialling a system where trustees visit different Day Clubs for feedback. They do their best to get statutory organisations to refer and think very widely about people they are not reaching.

The organisation does its best to network within the local community and has two trustees sitting on the Teesdale Action Partnership Older Peoples Task Group and has attempted to network with key post holders within statutory organisations such as the Local Federation of GPs.

The organisation feels it makes a huge difference to the health of its members, but it is difficult to quantify what the effect would be if they were not here. The organisation identifies that NHS costs and residential care would rise if they were not providing their services, but this is anecdotal evidence.

Case Study 5: Stanhope Community Association

Gathered by:



Each club conducts surveys that record how people are feeling and coping. These are then used by the Community Worker to produce reports for the Trustees and funders; the organisation mostly collects evidence for its funders.

It is felt by the trustees that the organisation takes a 'business like' approach to its operation. They work to a business-like model and employ people. They spend a lot of money on a service and need to be accountable. They have all the formal processes a business would have; however, the emphasis is on community not business.

Future plans

They would very much like to develop a business plan but are unsure what this should look like and would appreciate help from Power to Change to develop this and look at their sustainability. They do not have a written document as this would be more of a Survival Plan!

There is potential to expand what they do but they do not feel able to whilst they are grant dependant. Teesdale Day Clubs recognises the challenges that lay ahead; reflecting on their business model and considering a community business model may be advantageous to them.

They feel their members would not understand the term 'Community Business' but that it would be useful if it helped them access additional funding and support. A business plan that helped them to look at alternatives to grant funding and answer the question of sustainability would be highly useful.

Background information

The Community Association manages Stanhope Community Centre which is located in the centre of Stanhope but due to the nature of activities on offer it attracts people from Weardale, Tynedale, Consett, Bishop Auckland and Durham.

The community centre has been serving the community for a long time and was originally registered as a charity in 1983 and converted to a Foundation Community Interest Organisation in April 2016.

Currently there are no paid staff, but the trustees would like to consider recruiting a paid centre manager in the next couple of years.

The centre offers a wide range of activities including exercise classes, intermediate bridge, ukulele lessons, creative writing, German classes, whist drives, sewing group, pottery, Maths tuition and children's dancing.

In addition to the above, local organisations also hire space at the centre including Durham County Carers Support for drop in events, Alzheimer's Society for a Dementia Café, the ROAD Project who meet clients on a one to one basis who need support to seek employment, Credit Union as a collection point, Environment Agency and the local PACT (Police and Communities Together).

The centre is currently undergoing some refurbishment to provide yet more space for people to enjoy some new activities including, music appreciation, textiles and other similar activities. These have been requested through consultation and regular feedback from the users of the centre.

Trading and income generation

Apart from a recent grant from Big Lottery to refurbish some space on the first floor, the centre is self-sufficient.

Most of the activities are delivered by the centre, so people pay a fee to attend. Other activities are led by an instructor and so room hire is charged.

For the last couple of years, the centre has broken-even financially but has some reserves which are held in a savings account.

Community impact

They do not formally consult the community they serve unless necessary e.g. for a grant application, but they get regular feedback from users and regular requests from people to run an activity. Most of the activities are well attended so the committee feel that this proves that things are going well.

They are looking at carrying out a survey with the regular users to help understand if they are meeting the needs of the community and if there is anything else that they can do.

The measurement of their community impact is very anecdotal now, but they would like to carry out a more in-depth survey with the users.

Future plans

The centre would like to develop a business plan, but capacity is an issue as the centre is quite busy.

They would like to employ a centre manager at some point in the future but are concerned about how a role would be funded long term. They have looked at grants but understand that it's getting much harder to fund a role this way.

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