To all MPs in England

April 2019

Dear Colleague,

At Budget 2018 the government announced three schemes to support important community buildings as part of our commemoration of the centenary of the end of the First World War. I wanted to draw your attention to the scheme to support repairs and refurbishment of village halls that has opened for applications today and also to update you on the schemes for Veterans’ Community Centres and Miners’ Welfare Clubs. Colleagues may wish to publicise these opportunities for grant funding in their constituencies.

**Grant scheme for village halls**

There are more than 10,000 village halls across the country, many of which were constructed in memorial to those who gave their lives in the First World War. Today they provide vital hubs for communities to come together. Raising funds for major repairs and improvements is a challenge for trustees of village halls and the VAT payable on such work can provide a significant additional hurdle. Whilst it is not legally possible to remove VAT on village hall alterations this scheme will effectively refund village halls for these VAT costs by funding up to 20% of each project’s costs. By meeting 20% of the cost of refurbishments, this £3m fund will potentially allow for £15m of investment in village hall buildings.

**About the scheme**

The grant scheme will be managed by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), a registered charity. It will operate in rural areas across England in 2019/20.

Village hall committees are now able to apply for grants of up to £75,000 towards refurbishment and alteration of their buildings, from improvement works on existing facilities through to new meeting rooms. The application must be made by a village hall or similar rural community building and a registered charity. New build projects will not be eligible to apply due to their high costs and long timescales.

Applications will be assessed by a panel including Defra officials and ACRE staff with extensive experience of halls and grant schemes. Advice to potential applicants will be provided through the ACRE network. Applicants can apply by following this link: <http://acre.org.uk/our-work/rural-hall-improvement-fund.php>

**Veterans’ Community Centres and Miners’ Welfare Clubs**

At Budget 2018 we also announced £3 million for Veterans’ Community Centres such as Royal British Legion clubs, and £2 million for Miners’ Welfares sports facilities, providing assistance in coalfield communities.

In January the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust launched the Veterans’ Community Centres programme on our behalf, providing grants of up to £150,000 towards renovations and improvements. The programme will comprise three rounds of funding. Applications for the next round of funding can be made by following this link: <https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/veterans-community-centres/>

Sport England will run a competitive scheme to allocate new funding to improve Miners’ Welfare sports facilities. The programme will be spread over two years (2019/20 and 2020/21) and will support Miners’ Welfare organisations to provide new sport and leisure resources at the heart of communities. Sport England will publish more information about how to apply in due course, and will provide tailored local support to deliver successful projects and improve the capability of Miners’ Welfare organisations.



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| **Robert Jenrick**  **Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury** |