



12th September 2026

Dear Parish Councillors

Sandford St Martin & Ledwell Parish Hall

At a meeting of the Parish Hall Management Committee (PHMC) on 29th June 2026, it was decided to register the Hall as an Asset of Community Value with WODC. This registration will follow in October this year.

Registration as an ACV has many benefits. Of primary importance to the Committee, particularly in the light of false accusations that the Hall is loss-making, is that it will **strengthen our case when applying for grants and community funding**. An ACV listing can be useful evidence when applying for funding because you can demonstrate that the local authority recognises the building as having community value. Previous government community-ownership funding specifically recognises locally listed ACVs as eligible community assets.

Of secondary importance are the benefits which arise in the unlikely event that those that claim ownership of the Hall seek to sell or change its use as follows: -

1. It formally recognises the hall as an important community asset

WODC will consider whether the Hall's use furthers the **social wellbeing or interests of the local community**. Village halls are specifically the sort of community facility contemplated by the legislation. That will give us a formal council record saying, in effect: *The Hall is important to the continuing life of this community* which can be valuable in future discussions about its ownership, use or development.

2. It gives the community protection if the hall is put up for sale

Under the recently changed **English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026**, an ACV can give an eligible community organisation an opportunity to buy the property rather than simply watching it disappear onto the open market. The new legislation introduces a **right of first refusal** for communities and extends the period available to organise a purchase to **12 months**, within an independent valuation mechanism. That is considerably stronger than the old system, under which listing essentially gave the community a **six-month breathing space to bid**, but did not guarantee that the owner had to sell to the community.

3. It gives the village time to organise

If a hall is suddenly threatened with sale, the community can need to:

- form or strengthen a community organisation
- obtain valuations
- prepare a business plan
- investigate grants and loans
- raise community contributions

- approach the council
- negotiate with the owner
- put together a purchase offer.

The extended period is designed to make that much more realistic.

4. It can help prevent the hall being lost to another use

A village hall could otherwise potentially be sold for conversion, redevelopment or another private use. ACV status doesn't itself prevent planning applications or development, but it makes the hall a recognised community asset and gives the community additional legal protection if it comes onto the market.

5. It strengthens the hall's long-term position

The Hall might currently be perfectly secure. But registering it now means that if circumstances change in five or ten years' time, the community has already established its importance and has a legal mechanism available. Under the new legislation, ordinary ACV listing in England is also being extended from five years to ten years.

In conclusion, the PHMC believes that registration will be a very positive move for the Hall and the communities of Sanford St Martin and Ledwell. Further, it believes that the balance is strongly in favour of ACV status being granted in that the Hall is an important meeting place for the villages providing a venue for: -

- parish meetings
- clubs and societies
- children's activities
- exercise classes
- social events
- elections
- parties and private functions
- fundraisers
- community meetings

All the above apply in the case of Sandford St Martin and Ledwell Parish Hall. In addition, Government guidance specifically recognises village halls and community centres as examples of community assets.

Regards

On behalf of the PHMC