



**SOUTH of
SCOTLAND
ENTERPRISE**

Community hall retrofit playbook

A step-by-step guide to decarbonising
community halls and spaces across the South
of Scotland

For community hall committees, trustees and volunteers



Welcome

Community halls and spaces are the heart of our towns and villages – hosting everything from toddler groups and lunch clubs to ceilidhs and community meetings. But many halls and spaces across the South of Scotland are cold, expensive to heat, and difficult to look after.

This guide is here to help.

It gives you a **clear, step-by-step route** to improving your building, based on:

- How your building is constructed
- How often it is used
- What actually delivers comfort and savings in practice

It is **not a technical report** and it **does not assume prior knowledge**. You don't need to do everything at once.

The aim is to help you make sensible decisions in the right order, avoid costly mistakes, and access the right support.



Start here: The Golden Rule

Fix the building fabric before changing the heating

A new heating system will **not** solve problems caused by draughts, poor insulation, or damp. In fact, it often makes things worse.

For most community halls and spaces, a **“good enough”** fabric upgrade – not perfection – is what’s needed to unlock lower bills and better comfort.

In practice, this usually means:

- Proper roof insulation
- Draught-proofing and airtightness
- Improving the worst windows and doors

Once done, low-carbon heating works **properly**.

“A heat pump in a draughty hall doesn’t save money – it just leaks heat faster.”

Your retrofit journey

Step 1: Quick Wins (Do These First)

First, complete an Energy Assessment. Low-cost, high-impact improvements that almost every hall can do.

- LED lighting
- Draught-proofing obvious gaps
- Timers and basic heating controls

These measures:

- Save money immediately
- Improve comfort
- Prepare the building for bigger upgrades

Step 2: Get the Basics Right (Fabric First)

Focus on reducing heat loss first.

Priority measures for most halls:

- Roof insulation (usually the best value upgrade)
- Deeper draught-proofing
- Improve the leakiest windows and doors

You do **not** need to fully insulate every wall to make progress.

Step 3: Choose the Right Heating for How You Use the Hall

The “best” heating system depends entirely on **how often your hall is used**.

- Used most days → steady background heating works best
- Used occasionally → fast warm-up systems work best

This guide helps you choose the **right type**, not just the newest technology.

Step 4: Decide Whether Solar PV Makes Sense

Solar panels can be brilliant – or poor value – depending on when your hall uses electricity.

We include a simple **Solar PV Test** later in this guide to help you decide.

Depending on the use pattern, battery storage (with Solar PV) may also be a credible option – if buildings are also used in the evening.

Step 5: Funding and Support

You do not need to fund this alone. Support is available from:

- Local Energy Scotland
- Business Energy Scotland
- Community benefit and renewable funds
- Local funding via Council or Third Sector
- Targeted Scottish Government programmes

See **later in the guide** for an overview.

Find your hall type

“From assessments of dozens of halls across the South of Scotland, six common building archetypes have emerged. Each archetype has a proven retrofit pathway that balances cost, comfort and carbon reduction.”

Type	Building	Construction	Use Pattern
Type 1	Village Hall	Stone / solid wall	Intermittent
Type 2	Village Hall	Stone / solid wall	Regular
Type 3	Village Hall	Timber / modern	Intermittent
Type 4	Village Hall	Timber / modern	Regular
Type 5	Community Centre	Stone / solid wall	Regular
Type 6	Community Centre	Timber / modern	Regular

“For community spaces beyond halls and centres, simply match up your building with construction type and use pattern.”

Beyond the archetype guides

As well as providing a playbook for each of the six archetypes, this guide also includes:

- Case study halls from across the Scottish Borders – provided by Borders Community Action
- Basic guidance for insulation
- Choosing your heating system
- The Solar PV test
- Funding and support





Playbook Guide for each Archetype

Playbook: Type 1 Village Hall | Stone Walls | Intermittent Use

“This is one of the most common hall types in the South of Scotland.”

These buildings are often:

- Traditional stone construction
- Used a few evenings per week
- Cold when first opened
- Expensive to heat continuously



Newstead Village Hall

“What usually works best...

Focus on quick warmth when the hall is in use – not 24/7 heating.”

Playbook: Type 1

Village Hall | Stone Walls | Intermittent Use

“Solar PV is usually low priority unless there is significant daytime use.”

Recommended pathway:

1. Quick wins (LEDs, draught-proofing, smart controls)
2. Roof insulation and fabric improvements
3. Air-to-air heat pumps for fast warm-up, or infra-red panel heaters
4. Zoning and simple remote controls to heat only occupied spaces
5. Air-to-air systems work like a “boost heater”, warming the space quickly only when needed

Typically delivers:

- Faster warm-up for meetings and events
- Lower running costs than electric heaters
- Much better comfort for users

Next steps (see funding page later):

- Determine where you are at on the pathway
- Contact Business Energy Scotland for a free, impartial energy assessment
- Contact Local Energy Scotland & BCA re. grants and support & Launchpad service delivered via Community Energy Scotland

Playbook: Type 2

Village Hall | Stone Walls | Regular Use

“These halls are used frequently and justify deeper investment.”

These buildings are often:

- Traditional stone construction
- Regular occupancy and a more consistent annual use profile
- Used often enough to justify a greater level of capital investment
- Could be currently expensive to heat continuously



Bowden Village Hall

“Solar PV is appropriate to improve comfort, reduce running costs, and support long-term decarbonisation.”

Playbook: Type 2

Village Hall | Stone Walls | Regular Use

“Because the hall is used regularly, steady low-temperature heating is more efficient and comfortable.”

Recommended pathway:

1. Quick wins (LEDs, draught-proofing, smart controls)
2. Roof insulation and window improvements
3. Wet-system air source heat pump (underfloor or radiators)
4. Solar PV sized to daytime use (see guide later)

Typically delivers:

- Continuous and efficient low temperature heat for frequent use
- Lower running costs than oil heating or direct electric; lower carbon than gas heating
- Improved comfort for users

Next steps (see funding page later):

- Determine where you are at on the pathway
- Contact Business Energy Scotland for a free, impartial energy assessment
- Contact Local Energy Scotland & BCA re. grants and support & Launchpad service delivered via Community Energy Scotland

Playbook: Type 3

Village Hall | Timber/modern | Intermittent Use

“Modern halls may already have some insulation – seek this information out.”

These buildings are often:

- Timber or more modern construction
- May have a level of insulation already
- Used a few evenings per week
- Cold when first opened
- Expensive to heat continuously



Drumelzier Village Hall

*“What usually works best...
Focus on quick warmth when the hall is in use – not 24/7 heating.”*

Playbook: Type 3

Village Hall | Timber/modern | Intermittent Use

“Timber building fabric is likely to perform better than a traditional solid-wall hall.”

“Solar PV is usually low priority unless there is significant daytime use.”

Recommended pathway:

1. Quick wins (LEDs, draught-proofing, smart controls)
2. Roof insulation and basic fabric improvements
3. Air-to-air heat pumps for fast warm-up, or infra-red panel heaters
4. Zoning and simple remote controls to heat only occupied spaces
5. Air-to-air systems work like a “boost heater”, warming the space quickly only when needed

Typically delivers:

- Faster warm-up for meetings and events
- Lower running costs than electric heaters
- Much better comfort for users

Next steps (see funding page later):

- Determine where you are at on the pathway
- Contact Business Energy Scotland for a free, impartial energy assessment
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Playbook: Type 4 Village Hall | Timber/modern | Regular Use

“These halls are used frequently and justify deeper investment.”

These buildings are often:

- Timber or more modern construction
- May have a level of insulation already
- Regular occupancy and a more consistent annual use profile
- Used often enough to justify a greater level of capital investment
- Could be currently expensive to heat continuously



Edgerston Village Hall

“Solar PV is appropriate to improve comfort, reduce running costs, and support long-term decarbonisation.”

Playbook: Type 4

Village Hall | Timber/modern | Regular Use

“These halls are often ideal candidates for low-carbon heating with strong payback.”

Recommended pathway:

1. Quick wins (LEDs, draught-proofing, smart controls)
2. Roof insulation and window improvements
3. Wet-system air source heat pump (underfloor or radiators)
4. Solar PV sized to daytime use (see guide later)

Typically delivers:

- Continuous and efficient low temperature heat for frequent use
- Lower running costs than oil heating or direct electric; lower carbon than gas heating
- Improved comfort for users

Next steps (see funding page later):

- Determine where you are at on the pathway
- Contact Business Energy Scotland for a free, impartial energy assessment
- Contact Local Energy Scotland & BCA re. grants and support & Launchpad service delivered via Community Energy Scotland

Playbook: Type 5 Community Centre | Stone Walls | Regular Use

“High activity levels and a broader range of spaces than a typical village hall.”

These buildings are often:

- Traditional stone construction
- Regular occupancy and a more consistent annual use profile
- Used often enough to justify a greater level of capital investment
- Upgrades could be complex, so would benefit from professional design
- Could be currently expensive to heat continuously



Abbey Row Community Centre

“Solar PV is appropriate to improve comfort, reduce running costs, and support long-term decarbonisation.”

Playbook: Type 5

Community Centre | Stone Walls | Regular Use

“Because the community centre is used regularly, steady low-temperature heating is more efficient and comfortable.”

Recommended pathway:

1. Quick wins (LEDs, draught-proofing, smart controls)
2. Roof insulation and window improvements – supported via professional design
3. Wet-system ground source heat pump, potentially with an air source heat pump top-up
4. Solar PV sized to daytime use (see guide later)

Typically delivers:

- Continuous and efficient low temperature heat for frequent use
- Lower running costs than oil heating or direct electric; lower carbon than gas heating
- Improved comfort for users

Next steps (see funding page later):

- Determine where you are at on the pathway
- Contact Business Energy Scotland for a free, impartial energy assessment
- Contact Local Energy Scotland & BCA re. grants and support & Launchpad service delivered via Community Energy Scotland

Playbook: Type 6 Community Centre | Timber/modern | Regular Use

“High activity levels and a broader range of spaces than a typical village hall.”

These buildings are often:

- Timber or more modern construction
- May have a level of insulation already
- Regular occupancy and a more consistent annual use profile
- Used often enough to justify a greater level of capital investment
- Upgrades could be complex, so would benefit from professional design
- Could be currently expensive to heat continuously



Whitsome Ark

“Solar PV is appropriate to improve comfort, reduce running costs, and support long-term decarbonisation.”

Playbook: Type 6

Community Centre | Timber/modern | Regular Use

“These buildings often achieve strong comfort and carbon savings when systems are properly sized.”

Recommended pathway:

1. Quick wins (LEDs, draught-proofing, smart controls)
2. Roof insulation and window improvements – supported via professional design
3. Wet-system air source heat pump or wet-system ground source heat pump, potentially with an air source heat pump top-up
4. Solar PV sized to daytime use (see guide later)

Typically delivers:

- Continuous and efficient low temperature heat for frequent use
- Lower running costs than oil heating or direct electric; lower carbon than gas heating
- Improved comfort for users

Next steps (see funding page later):

- Determine where you are at on the pathway
- Contact Business Energy Scotland for a free, impartial energy assessment
- Contact Local Energy Scotland & BCA re. grants and support & Launchpad service delivered via Community Energy Scotland



Case studies

Courtesy of Borders Community Action – measures
funded through their Community Spaces
Decarbonisation Initiative (unless otherwise stated)

Newstead Village Hall

Context

- Volunteer-run village hall experiencing heat loss, poor thermal comfort and building fabric issues, affecting usability and maintenance.

Intervention

- £10,546 funding used to install roof insulation and replace the old entrance with a modern, secure double-glazed front door.

Outcomes

- Reduced heat loss and noticeably warmer internal conditions.
- Increased hall bookings and activity, with wider community use.

Why it matters

- Shows how targeted retrofit measures can quickly improve comfort, viability and use.
- Demonstrates the role of early-stage upgrades in unlocking further decarbonisation investment.

Next steps

- Secured further funding via CARES to install solar PV and battery storage.



Blainslie Village Hall

Context

- Volunteer-run hall with thin walls, high ceilings and poor thermal performance, making the space cold, costly to heat and less usable during winter months.

Intervention

- £4,000 grant to install roof insulation using a local contractor, addressing a key source of heat loss.

Outcomes

- Improved heat retention and comfort, reducing drafts and cold spots.
- Increased year-round use.
- Lower energy costs and improved long-term viability of the hall.

Why it matters

- Demonstrates the impact of low-cost, fabric-first measures.
- Shows how early retrofit action can unlock confidence and capacity for future decarbonisation.

Next steps

- Committee planning to upgrade the heating system, building on improved insulation performance.



Lindean Village Hall

Context

- Small, volunteer-run village hall with significant heat loss and high energy costs.

Intervention

- £14,400 grant used to install external wall insulation. Earlier upgrades fitted solar PV with battery storage, radiant heaters and loft insulation.

Outcomes

- Lower energy costs and improved heat retention.
- More comfortable, evenly heated space for users.

Why it matters

- Shows how targeted, modest investment can secure long-term benefits for community buildings.

- Demonstrates the value of place-based retrofit support for trusted local assets.

Next steps

- Plans to upgrade kitchen and toilet facilities to further improve community use.



Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth Village Hall

Context

- Volunteer-run village hall seeking to reduce energy use while maintaining a consistently warm, high-quality space for frequent bookings.

Intervention

- £2,244 funding to install efficient lighting and energy-efficient heater panels with remote control.

Outcomes

- Improved thermal comfort and reduced energy consumption through better controls.

Why it matters

- Demonstrates how small, well-targeted investments can deliver immediate benefits.

- Shows the value of a phased, plan-led approach to decarbonising community buildings.

Next steps

- Progressing planning consent for solar PV and battery storage. Sharing learning with other Berwickshire village halls pursuing solar solutions.





**Further details on
measures & funding
and support**

Fix leaks and moisture problems first

There is no point insulating a building that is wet or damaged.

Common issues to fix first:

- Leaking gutters and downpipes
- Missing slates or roof defects
- Blocked drains and gullies
- Cracked pointing

Other issues like groundwater seepage, rising damp need professional advice.



“A damp wall can lose up to 30% of its thermal performance.”

Assessing energy use

“If not already done so, complete an energy assessment of the hall, ideally to PAS2038 standard.”

The assessment should cover a fabric assessment, ventilation review, heating and energy audit and operational assessment.

Tips:

- Try and keep accurate records of your bills and meter readings.
- Even amount of oil delivered in litres is useful.
- Small temperature logging devices in the main hall space is useful to measure comfort.
- Use a small logbook or questionnaire to hall users to ask if they feel chilly or too warm in any spaces.



Airtight testing is a good baseline to look for leaks



Thermal Imaging can be easy way to find cold spots

Insulation

Roof insulation

You must choose between a "cold roof" (insulation at ceiling level) and a "warm roof" (insulation at rafter level). Loft top-up is usually the best value measure you can do – up to a 300mm deep cover.



Insufficient and 'gappy' insulation on left and sufficient and continuous cover on right

Windows and doors

Repair and seal first; and/or replace the leakiest windows.

For Historically Sensitive buildings, the priority is preservation through "light-touch" thermal improvements like secondary glazing or draught-stripping.

For non-sensitive buildings, high-performance double glazing is standard.

Draughtproofing

Seal floors/skirtings and service penetrations.

Apply airtightness tapes around window/door frames.

Ventilation matters

The rule is simple:

“No insulation without ventilation.”

Ventilation is required to help protect fabric.

Blocking air movement without providing proper ventilation causes:

- Condensation
- Mould
- Poor indoor air quality

Do not block ventilation for kitchens and toilets.



Choosing your heating system

Heat pumps work best when:

- Heat loss has been reduced
- Systems are properly sized
- Controls are simple and understood



Air to Air units on community building used intermittently

Which heat pump suits your hall?

Used most days...

- Recommend: Wet-system air-to-water heat pump
- Provides steady background heat
- Radiators, fan convectors or underfloor heating

Used occasionally...

- Recommend: Air-to-air heat pump (dry system)
- Provides rapid warm-up and easy zoning

Wet or dry system?

- This guide has typically suggested a wet-system
- If you cannot face the disruption of new piping etc, then dry systems can be just as viable and include infra-red panels

The Solar PV test

Answer one question:

“When is your hall mainly used?”

Mostly daytime (9–4)?

→ Solar PV usually makes sense

Mostly evenings and weekends?

→ Solar PV is often poor value unless paired with battery storage



Roof mounted PV in a conservation zone on rear facing roofs on left and ground mounted array away from the building on the right

“Solar (and batteries) should be sized to your actual electricity use, not maximised.”

National, regional and local funding and support

Organisation	Remit
Local Energy Scotland	Delivers the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) and has information on current funding, best practice guidance and provides ongoing support and mentoring.
Community Energy Scotland	Provides support for community renewable energy and decarbonisation projects. Recently introduced the Launchpad (a CARES scheme delivered in partnership with CES and DTAS) to get one-to-one support from a local Community Energy Officer who can advise and help your group; access expertise on areas including governance, democratic finance or technical input and; connect with experienced community energy mentors who can share insights and lessons.
Business Energy Scotland	Provide free, impartial support and access to funding to help small and medium-sized enterprises save energy, carbon and money – including free, impartial energy assessments.
Energy Saving Trust	Information on funding and technical aspects including a Solar Energy Calculator, as well as an overview of technologies and a 'find an installer' map.
SOSE	Support community initiatives with an enterprise element and social enterprises – beyond retrofit but can also provide initial technical support.
Borders Community Action and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway	Support available to third sector organisations (community groups, charities and social enterprises) with respect to governance, training, funding (support with applications and funding distribution).
Council LHEES teams (SBC & DGC)	Support individuals, communities, businesses, and places and provide expertise, guidance and links with other regional plans and contacts across the councils
Council Communities teams (SBC & DGC)	Work with community groups and organisations to support community planning, project development and signposting to funding opportunities.

“You do not need to fund this alone. Fantastic support is out there to suit every type of community and community building.”



To discuss community hall retrofit, your wider community energy plans or any other enterprising opportunities, contact SOSE through our [website](#).

This guide was completed with the grateful support of Borders Community Action and Luths Services.

The retrofit pathways provided in this guide are indicative and based on average data across 44 assessed buildings; actual costs and energy savings will vary based on your hall's specific condition and usage. This resource is for informational purposes only, and committees should consult with qualified professionals and competent installers to ensure technical suitability and compliance with building standards. Implementing insulation or heating measures without proper professional guidance carries risks of unintended consequences, such as fabric decay or poor indoor air quality.

