



THE PRINCE'S
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND

THE VILLAGE SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to build a strong community

Foreword by Miranda Hart



INNOVATION

VISION

COMMUNITY

SUSTAINABILITY

CONNECTION

SELF-SUFFICIENCY



THE PRINCE'S
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND

‘It’s clear to me that there are huge opportunities to help the countryside and rural people meet the challenges of the future. But we do need to be clear about what we want to achieve, thinking particularly about what will be important to our children and grandchildren.

The role of the countryside, with all its diversity and idiosyncrasies, in our national life is too important to be left to chance.’

HRH The Prince of Wales

Writing as guest editor of Country Life
to celebrate his 70th birthday, November 2018



THE PRINCE'S
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND

The Prince's Countryside Fund,
137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ
princescountrysidefund.org.uk

Registered charity no. England and Wales 1136077;
Scotland SC048055

Company limited by guarantee no. 07240359

Produced by Eye to Eye Media on behalf of The Prince's Countryside Fund.
Axe & Bottle Court, 70 Newcomen Street, London SE1 1YT.
Writers: Cathy Howes, Helen Aldis. Illustrator: Mark Long

CONTENTS

	The village sustainability top 10	4
1	The village spirit - Introduction by Miranda Hart	6
2	It's all about community	12
3	Putting the heart back into the village	24
4	Because there's no place like home	38
5	Getting from A-B	48
6	Making business work	56
7	Keeping in touch	64
8	How to get help when you need it	72
9	Where to find funding	82
10	What does the future hold?	88
	Thanks to...	95
	Index	96

THE VILLAGE SUSTAINABILITY TOP 10

To meet the challenges facing rural communities, villages are coming together to create the services and assets they need, now and for generations to come. To help safeguard the future viability of villages, The Prince's Countryside Fund has come up with these ways for them to...

1 Create a village vision From a small idea or neighbourhood plan to a bigger, more ambitious project, you need a clear, strategic vision for your village. Identify your priorities, now and for the future, and the resources you need to make them viable in the long term.

2 Form a forum to come together Whether your group is a parish council or

a committee focused on one task, include a range of people from all demographics in the community. Reach out to farmers, landowners and local businesses to identify – and respond to – your needs. Put together a plan and work with your local authority to find ways to make your ideas stronger and easier to deliver.



3 Give a voice to all A strong, thriving community is an inclusive one, so give residents of all ages and backgrounds time and space to collaborate and understand each other's needs.

4 Find a space to meet Every village needs a place to meet, talk and build a sense of community, whether that's a pub, shop, village hall or

a post office in a church. Look after and maintain your assets to stop them being lost forever. Once gone, they're very difficult to replace.

5 Expand your connections

A rural community can't operate in isolation. You need good transport links and connections to the local market town, schools, hospitals and businesses if you're going to attract people to your village to live and work. Learning new skills and building people's confidence in digital communication and e-commerce is essential for future access to services.

6 Nurture a wider network

Learn from the experiences of other communities, or ask for advice and support from local and national organisations to shape your plans. Bring in experienced experts or facilitators, or engage with local businesses to help get new community initiatives off the ground.



7 Develop self-sufficiency

Communities shouldn't be left to 'go it alone', but there are times when the best outcome is for a village to come together to solve its own problems. This could be through some form of community ownership, volunteer schemes, or support networks - face to face and digital.

8 Discover your creative spirit and take an innovative approach

Have the confidence to try something new. Take inspiration from others who've had a go and seek advice and help from a variety of support organisations. Solutions come in different forms, from libraries in pubs and community cafés, to transport apps, energy schemes and affordable housing projects.



9 Build financial resilience

Developing a diverse, thriving local economy will help your community remain sustainable in the future. Whether this is through improved access to training or support, better local employment opportunities, or by creating a place to do business - it all helps.

10 Become a strong community

A strong, resilient community is one that knows all the people within it, the skills they have and the services they need. It also has the drive to come together to support and deliver these services - in partnership with others or with the community as a whole.



THE VILLAGE SPIRIT

...is alive and well and rising to the challenges of rural living everywhere.

And no one knows this better than Miranda Hart, comedy writer, actress and enthusiastic ambassador for The Prince's Countryside Fund.

Miranda has lived in – and loved – the countryside her whole life, making her the ideal rural champion to introduce The Village Survival Guide





INTRODUCTION

by Miranda Hart

‘I’m incredibly grateful to everyone from generations past and present who’ve had a hand in protecting and sustaining our land, so that I’m able to enjoy living in it and from it.’

I feel very honoured to have been asked to write an introduction to The Village Survival Guide. Honoured on three counts: my passion for the countryside; the importance of this practical, encouraging and supportive guide; and to be involved in a small way in The Prince’s Countryside Fund in my new role of ambassador (if I see any of you in the country anytime soon I expect to be called Ambassador Hart and, ideally, be curtsied to!).

I assume most of you reading this share my passion for the countryside, our unique British landscape and keeping rural communities flourishing. Our individual reasons for that passion will vary from simply the love of being in nature, to animal welfare and protecting species, farming, village life and all the myriad joys the country brings. I’m incredibly grateful to everyone from generations past and present who’ve had a hand in protecting and sustaining our land, so that I’m able to enjoy living in it and from it.

I have lived rurally on and off throughout my life. I was born in Devon and although I only lived there for my first two years, family holidays always took us back. I believe those formative experiences instilled in me a love of remote landscapes such as Dartmoor and the wildlife, rivers, rock-pool swimming and the sea. Delights that remain great loves of mine.

I spent my childhood years in a Hampshire village near Petersfield, and it was in the vibrant village hall that I started my comedy career. If it wasn’t for the villagers taking time outside of work and family commitments to maintain all aspects of that hall to

keep it fit for productions, I can't imagine where I would have first been able to try out my writing and performing. And, more to the point, if it wasn't for the kindly friends, family and neighbours who supported the shows and, in most cases, probably pretended to laugh and encourage me – I cannot vouch for the quality of my first village hall productions! But they certainly did sow the seeds of many things that came later, so I owe much to that village infrastructure and the safe community it provided me generally. I was very fortunate to live somewhere with a regular bus service, access to good local doctors, and a community with the enthusiasm for the arts of every kind (my mother in her 80th year still plays piano for the choir). I know not all village life is as lucky.

Recognising rural challenges

Despite the beauty, mystery, wonder and importance of rural living, I am only too aware of some of the challenges. For the last six years I have predominantly lived in Sussex – there were spells of work that drove me back to the Big Smoke where I would feel like a trapped animal. (You know you are a very proud country bumpkin when returning to a city makes you feel permanently hot and cross – I often thought it was an early menopause before I realised it was simply concrete, people and traffic!)

Sussex is wonderful, but despite that – and however much my heart yearns for open wilderness over crowded cities – my patience was often tested. For example, sending a text message would mean hanging out of a window at a particularly athletic and unstable angle that wouldn't have passed any health and safety measures – and that I wasn't in any way agile enough for – just to get a mobile signal! Or when on a cold winter's evening after tirelessly getting in logs to keep the much-needed fire going, all I wanted was to curl up and watch a Netflix movie, yet I was denied that pleasure due to the limited broadband network and so was faced with that buffering wheel of doom on my laptop. I never felt it fair that the effective use of technology belonged on



The village spirit



COUNTRY BORN AND BRED

From a childhood in Hampshire (top), to the serenity of Sussex today, with loyal companion Peggy

solely to city dwellers, and I was keenly aware that any time I mentioned country living issues, those city dwellers wouldn't understand. It was as if they thought you shouldn't complain – the assumption being that you lived in a tranquil idyll without any of the stresses of urban living and therefore a permanent state of bliss. But after the local council told me they wouldn't be coming up to the end of the track to my cottage (it was fairly remote) to collect rubbish, and I was carrying two heavy, smelly bin bags down the lane to the nearby farm because it was too muddy to take my car down, it certainly did not feel remotely idyllic. And when I inevitably slipped and found myself face to face with a cowpat, far from blissful. I think people imagined healthy flushed cheeks, constant sunshine, me apron-clad and constantly baking apple pies on a picturesque AGA, like a sort of rustic Nigella!

And when I lived on my own there, and had no access to a car due to injury or illness, I had a clear insight into some of the worrying isolation that people live in, with no transport links to the shops, medical support, or friends for simple connection.

Striving for a sense of community

I am passionate about the idea that nobody living in the countryside – where they want to live, where they make their living, where their family has perhaps had a long history in the area, where they do important work to sustain the land and the wildlife and provide food for the country – should be alone. Emotional and physical wellbeing is maintained by community – by people feeling known, loved and supported; by people having a sense of purpose within that community; by people feeling safe; by people having places and set-ups in which to have fun and relax, even if that is comedians trying to start their career with a terrible sketch show! If community is the key to living well, then everyone needs to be connected and that means practical changes to many rural areas, from transport to technology.

But these challenges, however frustrating, and at times upsetting, actually shine a light on all the reasons we adore the countryside. That is, remoteness may mean difficulty with connectivity, but that remoteness has so much to



celebrate – the peace, the space, the nature – all of which support holistic wellbeing (there are endless studies on the positive effect of beauty on the nervous system), as well as providing visitors from the city with a much-needed refuge and, in some areas, healthy tourism.

Villages may be getting more cut off and village halls and churches may have less attendance and need repair, but they are still standing, and they have such beauty, such rich history, individual purposes and character – they are communities ready to be rebuilt. Everyone living rurally, despite the difficulties, is there for unique, beloved and vital reasons and therefore deserves respect, understanding and support. Our countryside is one of the most wonderful things about our little island and I admire everyone who is a part of it. I really hope this guide provides some tips to help necessary changes happen so that life becomes more connected, freer, fruitful (literally and metaphorically), peaceful and joyful.

With much love to all my fellow bumpkins!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miranda Hart'.

Miranda Hart

Buy The Village
Survival Guide to
continue reading...

£4.99

I S B N 9 7 8 - 1 - 5 2 7 2 - 4 2 7 2 - 2



9 7 8 1 5 2 7 2 4 2 7 2 2