



‘I’ve injected the life back into my village’

Dismayed by the crumbling community spirit in her small Norfolk village, Victoria Gray, 41, made it her mission to bring the locals back together again.

‘When my partner Darren and I moved to Wereham, an idyllic village in Norfolk, 20 years ago, it was difficult not to fall in love with its postcard-worthy pond and pub. I’d lived in Norfolk since I was a teenager, and Wereham seemed like the perfect place to bring up a family.

Life in the village was everything we hoped it would be. When Darren and I got married, four years after moving in, the church was being refurbished – but the villagers pulled out all the stops to make sure that it would be ready in time. And with events at the village hall most days, it was the beating heart of our little community.

But over the years, the community spirit I’d grown accustomed to started to wane. The village school, butcher’s and post office had all closed. We also lost many of the groups that had once made up village life – such as the WI

and the badminton club – until the only thing left for the 700 residents was the village hall.

Then, in 2009, access to the hall was restricted when a survey uncovered problems with the structure. Suddenly, anything that caused the building to vibrate (parties, aerobics classes or barn dances) was banned by the charity which owns the hall.

However, I didn’t realise how much all these changes had affected our little community until the spring of 2012. With the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee approaching, people up and down the