

Community Action Northumberland NEWS



AUTUMN ISSUE - October 2011

CAN - supporting voluntary action and communities throughout Northumberland

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60 years and still going strong

This autumn, CAN (Community Action Northumberland) is celebrating its 60th birthday. We were established as a separate organisation in 1951 – Northumberland Rural Community Council – following several years as the Rural Department of the then Northumberland and Tyneside Council of Social Service.

Like all other rural community councils, our aim has always been to promote and support community-based action in the villages and towns of our area. We have achieved this not only by providing expert advice and encouragement to individual community groups, but also by monitoring and influencing the work of other bodies which impact on community life: not least the County Council and Government but also a wider range of service-providers in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

Over the decades, we have helped to create a variety of now-familiar organisations and services, such as Age Concern, the Citizens Advice Bureau, development trusts, several of the disability networks, the (former) Pre-School Playgroup Association and the two local CVS (councils of voluntary service). At various times we have also researched and promoted action to address widely-held needs across Northumberland, such as mains electricity, mobile phone coverage, 625-line TV, bus services, affordable housing, post offices and local small businesses.

We have also played a part in helping local communities to participate in, and benefit from, a number of UK and European development programmes, ranging from Vital Villages and the Market Towns Initiative, to LEADER, Objective 2 and various Lottery opportunities. For a while we also ran competitions for local communities, including the Best Kept Village and Village of the Year.

Recently, we have had to reappraise our priorities in response to changes in the funding of our work. First, the County Council will no longer be providing grants to bodies such as CAN and the CVS's. Instead, we may be contracted by a consortium Connect 4 Change, to provide some advice and training to local voluntary organisations. The scale and scope of this will probably be smaller than before, but the detail will not be known until next February or thereabouts. Second, and as part of a development over several years,

our 'rural development' funding from DEFRA is now intended to support intelligence-gathering and strategic involvement to influence local provision on a number of themes, rather than giving support to local communities. However, fortunately local donations and some Big Lottery funding are making a contribution towards the cost of our work with individual groups.

The themes which DEFRA are expecting us to pursue include affordable housing, better Broadband, transport/access to local services, fuel/energy, community-led planning and community assets.

This is a very broad agenda, and we are a small organisation. Our main contributions will include:

- working with responsible bodies to devise and implement programmes on these themes
- gathering intelligence to inform the Government on local problems and solutions
- promoting action by local communities to address the themes.

We will also continue to be available to support the diversity of needs on which local communities call for our help, such as grant aid, project-development, quality initiatives, legal matters, overcoming conflicts, governance and so-on. We will be in a better position to determine our overall capacity to undertake this work, when our finances become clearer in the New Year. Our business plan and action plan can be viewed on our website:

www.ca-north.org.uk

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Climate Change, Low-Carbon Living and all things Energy

This autumn 2011 edition of CAN News is focusing on the challenges of climate change affecting us all – individuals and communities.

We will look at this in the context of government priorities, schemes and initiatives, local impact and local rural action. We will highlight some of the work that is underway in the county to adapt to changing circumstances and to mitigate the effects of climate change by moving towards low carbon living, using alternative forms of transport and energy, reducing energy usage, implementing energy saving measures, making community buildings / village halls more energy efficient and working with others in the community to take action. Whether you are a believer or a sceptic of climate change science there can be no doubt that a change in our behaviour - individually and collectively – is necessary to reduce the harmful impact that emissions from energy use, transport and consumption have on our environment – and that it is a crucial priority for all of us.

The national context:

The Coalition Government is seeking to tackle climate change whilst securing energy supplies, developing a green economy to create green jobs and green growth and to move towards a low carbon UK. This runs alongside its international obligations to limit global carbon emissions, find new sources of funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation and to drive an increase in the EU emission reduction target to 30% by

2020. At a national level the Government focus is on **3 key UK policy areas:-**

- UK energy supply – achieving secure, affordable and low carbon energy in the future;
- A low carbon UK – help the UK move to a low carbon economy;
- Supporting consumers – to improve energy efficiency and address fuel poverty.



ACRE and the Rural Community Action Network

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is the national umbrella body of the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) - of which C.A.N is a member - which operates at national, regional and local level in support of rural communities.

Collectively, we believe that *“behavioural change is more powerful when climate change impact is made locally relevant and collective action by local people reinforces initiatives aimed at addressing climate change priorities. Rather than preaching to communities about global impacts, the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) aims to work with them to identify local solutions and generate new approaches and new opportunities.*

In this way all sections of the community become engaged, including those who may not be attracted to action on climate change issues alone. RCAN embeds carbon reduction measures within its support for community action and encourages local community groups to reduce the use of resources such as energy, fuel and water”

Key points for rural communities:

- RCAN has successfully initiated numerous community projects that contribute to the climate change agenda. Opportunities are being promoted and supported for communities to harness local community assets for energy production, introduce community-based transport schemes to reduce reliance on the car and ensure local community-owned facilities adopt energy efficient practices in both their design and their use.
- reductions in the use of the car and increasing energy / fuel costs have a disproportionate impact on rural communities.
- reliance on private transport and decreasing viability of rural services is already a factor in the increasing isolation of those least able to afford to travel
- rising temperatures bring changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events: recent years have seen flooding in many rural areas and rural communities also suffered greatly from the extreme weather of the winter in 2009.
- more isolated rural communities will be the last to benefit from public sector interventions
- on the other hand, rural communities have a stronger role to play in addressing climate change impact because they are self-governing, they already own most of their community assets and facilities. They have a unique relationship with surrounding land assets and a tradition of self-help that can be harnessed to develop community initiatives.

- all communities will have to adapt to climate change challenges but the impact will be far greater on rural communities.

AGM time....

CAN's **AGM** will take place on **Thursday 3rd November** from 2pm at The Corn Exchange, Morpeth Town Hall, Market Place, Morpeth, NE61 1LZ. Response forms are available from Sue on 01670 517178 or via email on sueandrew@ca-north.org.uk These are needed, but are essential if you require lunch



On the following pages you will find more information about government and regional initiatives as well as some of the many local schemes and projects that communities in Northumberland have developed to meet the challenges of climate change.

We are in the process of developing a section of our website dedicated to the issues of climate change and low carbon living – with a focus on energy efficiency, energy conservation, fuel poverty and renewable energy.

You can access the site at www.ca-north.org.uk/rural/energy

We have included at the end of this special feature in our Newsletter a Resources page that highlights publications, toolkits etc that are available on the website for you to download. We will add more topics as we develop the site further. The website will also list some of the many organisations, bodies, groups that offer further information, advice or assistance.

The heat is on

In 2008 Northumberland Strategic Partnership produced “The Heat is On” a strategic framework for climate change planning in Northumberland. This followed a DVD by the same name produced in 2007 aimed at initiating countywide debate amongst policy makers, community representatives and businesses on the implications of climate change for the county. The framework helped that discussion by presenting an agenda for action. It aimed to ‘encourage partners to put in place effective and

timely measures at both corporate and community levels to address the causes and implications of climate change in Northumberland by mainstreaming climate change planning within their own core business.’ Northumberland County Council has recently published the delivery plan for “The Heat is On”. Its ambitions cover activities as diverse as regulatory change, infrastructure developments, community support, incentivising behavioural change, creating a low carbon culture, research and economic development. The

plan will be the guiding document for addressing the partnership challenge of “Making Climate Change Work to Our Advantage” which is identified in the recently updated Sustainable Community Strategy for Northumberland.

You can access “The Heat Is On” Framework, Delivery Plan and the DVD from our website.



The Energy Bill and the Green Deal

Just a few weeks ago the **Energy Bill** – containing powers to allow householders to pay for energy efficiency improvements to their homes from the savings they make by using less gas and electricity - cleared the House of Commons with cross-party support.

The Green Deal is the Coalition Government’s flagship policy for improving the energy efficiency of buildings in Great Britain. It is based on a key principle that some energy efficiency-related changes to properties pay for themselves, in effect, through the resulting savings

on fuel bills. The Green Deal will create a new financing mechanism to allow a range of energy efficiency measures, such as loft insulation or heating controls, to be installed in people’s homes and businesses at no upfront cost. It should be available from late 2012/early 2013 but more detail is awaited on the types of installations it may fund.

Some key points:-

- householders have access to finance without any up front payment
- provided by range of private sector funders and paid through a charge

on the energy bill of up to 25 yrs

- the charge is on the dwelling not the initial occupant
- it is underpinned by the “golden rule”: financial savings from improvements should exceed the repayment amount.
- limited to thermal insulation of walls and roofs
- energy measures that cannot comply with the ‘golden rule’ are likely to be funded or subsidised through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is being introduced because the Green Deal will not be suitable for fuel poor consumers, as they may already ration the amount of energy used, and will actually need to use more energy, not less, to achieve a healthy home environment. The ECO is also likely to support more expensive measures in hard to treat homes. These programmes will replace the existing Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) when they end in 2012. They will also replace the Warm Front scheme in England which currently delivers heating and insulation measures to vulnerable households. The Obligation will require energy companies to support the installation of energy efficiency improvements to homes and will be designed from the ground up to integrate with Green Deal.

Key points:-

- It is funded through a levy on energy bills
- It will be the primary mechanism for assisting the disadvantaged
- the level of funding is yet to be determined
- it should allow for 100 % funded whole house improvements
- no indication yet of the level of resources to be made available
- concerns that resources may not be devoted in their entirety to fuel poor households in conventional properties and to fuel poor households occupying hard-to-treat dwellings

The 'Renewable Heat Incentive'?

What is it?

The RHI is a government incentive scheme designed to reward buildings that are heated using renewable energy. Industrial, commercial, public sector, community buildings - and in a second phase, residential homes - that install renewable home heating will all be eligible to apply for the RHI, which will guarantee regular 'tariff' payments for 20 years based on the amount of renewable energy they generate. Most forms of renewable heat generation, in all sizes, are eligible.

The first phase of the RHI will be targeted on larger industrial and commercial, as well as public sector and community buildings. Then from October 2012, when the government's Green Deal scheme starts, households will also become eligible to join.

Before that, in order to encourage take-up of renewable

heat technologies, RHI 'Premium Payments' are being made available from 1 August 2011. These are one-off payments to help households cover the initial cost of getting a new renewable heating system installed. Owners of all eligible renewable heating systems installed on or after 15 July 2009 will be able to apply for the RHI once it's introduced.

It works like this...

Firstly, you install a renewable heat system - solar thermal heating system; biomass or wood-burning boiler; ground source or air source heat pump - in your property; secondly you measure how much heat your renewable energy systems produce; and finally you get paid a fixed quarterly 'tariff' based on that output, the type of technology and the size of the system, for 20 years.



Other key points:

- the RHI is designed specifically for renewable energy technologies that heat buildings - so it does NOT cover electricity generated from solar electricity (PV) panels or wind turbines: these are covered by Feed In Tariffs (FITs)

Full details are on the DECC and the EST websites.

What Are Feed-In Tariffs?

Feed-In Tariffs (FITs) are payments to ordinary energy users for the renewable electricity they generate. The tariffs have been introduced by the Government to help increase the level of renewable energy in the UK.

The Tariffs give three financial benefits:

- a payment for all the electricity you produce, even if you use it yourself
- additional bonus payments for electricity you export into the grid
- a reduction on your standard electricity bill, from using energy you produce yourself

Who are they for?

Broadly speaking, the FITs are for everyone, including households, landlords, businesses and even organisations such as schools and care homes.

What renewable energy systems are eligible?

Most forms of renewable electricity generation in all sizes up to 5 megawatts (enough for a large factory) which are supported by the Renewables Obligation.

Do they cover heating?

No; that will be covered by the Renewable Heat Incentive.

The first review of the Feed-In Tariffs has been brought forward by the government to take place during 2011 and will have effect from April 2012. This has two elements: a comprehensive review of the whole scheme and a fast-track review of large-scale (over 50 kw) and stand alone solar photovoltaic (PV) projects and farm-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) projects (up to and including 500 kw).

Fuel Poverty

A household is usually regarded as being in fuel poverty when it has to spend more than 10% of its income to keep the home heated to 21°C in the living room and to 18°C in the rest of the house. Although not the only determinants, there are **three main factors that contribute to whether a household is fuel poor:-**

- the cost of energy
- the household's income, and
- the energy efficiency of the property.

Although a review of the definition and processes for measuring fuel poverty are underway, the calculation is currently assessed through a modelling process using several national household/housing surveys such as the English House Condition Survey.

In its "Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2011" DECC revealed that ...

- In 2009, there were about 5.5 million fuel poor households in the UK, up from 4.5 million in 2008.
- In England, there were about 4 million fuel poor households (3.3 million in 2008)
- Fuel poverty in 2009 amongst vulnerable households (containing elderly people, children or someone

disabled or long term sick) was 4.5 million households

- Almost 1 in 4 households in rural areas suffer from fuel poverty
- Fuel poverty is most common among those living in private rented accommodation

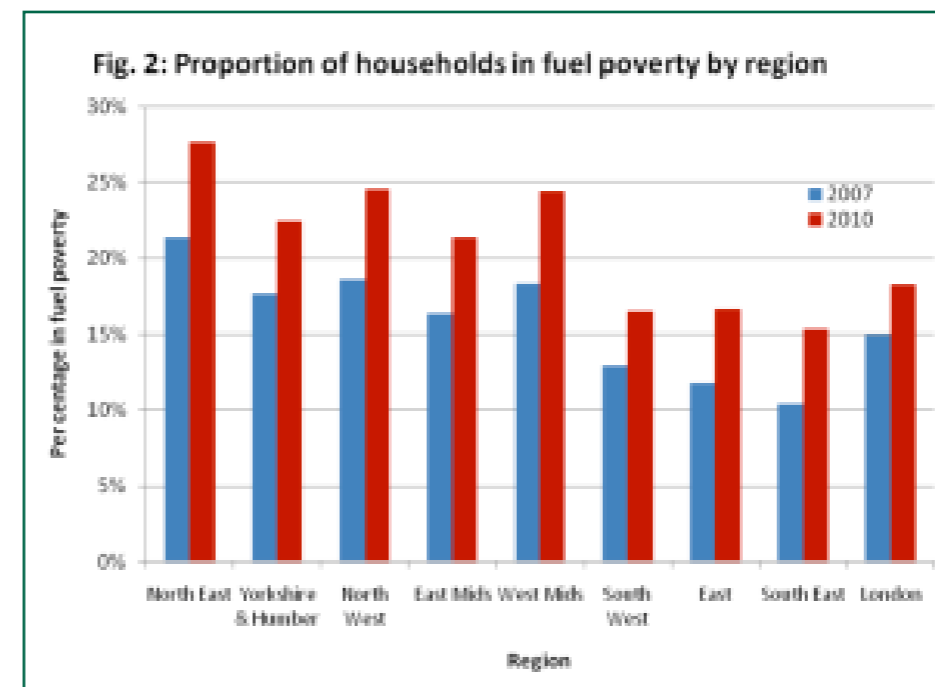
However, more recent analysis carried out by National Energy Action (NEA) estimates that fuel poverty currently affects more than six million UK households.

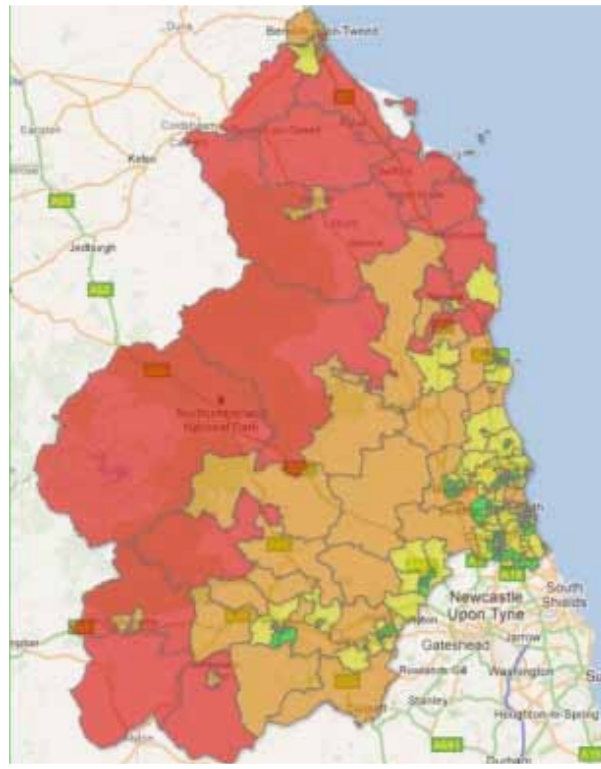
In a publication entitled "A 'now cast' of Fuel Poverty in 2010" - a Fuel Poverty Monitoring Tool prepared for the Centre for Sustainable Energy - **the North East region shows the highest level of fuel poverty in 2010** among England's nine regions on both the full (26%) and basic income definitions (28%) of all households in the region

(The "full income" definition includes benefits received for housing costs as "income" and is the Government's preferred definition of fuel poverty. The Government also provides fuel poverty data according to a "basic income" definition, which does not include benefits received for housing costs as "income".)

As in many other aspects of rural community life, rural dwellers are hit harder by fuel poverty than urban areas...

- In villages and hamlets oil is a major source of heating fuel, and electricity for heating is more common in villages than any other area type.
- While over 60% of homes in urban areas and rural towns are cavity walled and on mains gas, this is true of only 32% in villages and 21% in hamlets.
- Fuel poverty is also closely linked to off mains gas and solid wall properties (especially in the private-rented sector) of which there are nearly 26,000 and 35,000 respectively in Northumberland.
- Such properties make a significant contribution to fuel poverty in rural Northumberland - being extremely energy inefficient and difficult to insulate - and are usually referred to as 'hard-to-treat' homes. These homes cannot accommodate typical modern energy efficiency measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation and may also include properties with no loft space.
- Due to the high costs of heating hard to treat homes, families who would cope relatively well in a more energy efficient home might likely find themselves in fuel poverty.
- Government programmes have not delivered equitable benefits for rural communities mainly because of a focus on delivering cavity and roof insulation and a lack of funding to upgrade solid wall and off gas properties with associated higher costs of delivery.





Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) mapping data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) modified by The Guardian.

Fuel Poverty data from DECC Sub-regional Fuel Poverty Levels 2008. Mapped using Google Fusion Tables.

- RED AREAS = above 40% of households in fuel poverty
- ORANGE AREAS = 28.1% to 40%
- YELLOW AREAS = 16.1% to 28%
- GREEN AREAS = 16% and below

Northumberland County Council's own maps of fuel poverty 'hot spots' correlate with concentrations of solid wall properties.

Insulating such properties is difficult; is an intrusive process when the property is occupied; and many people are resistant to having it done as it alters the character of the property.

Hard-To-Treat Homes

One of the key contributors to fuel poverty in Northumberland is the number of solid wall properties (especially in the private-rented sector) of which there are nearly 35,000

Usually, homes built before or around 1920 will have solid external walls rather than cavity walls – which lend themselves more easily to insulation. Such homes are extremely energy inefficient - 45% of the heat lost in an un-insulated solid walled home is through the walls. Difficult to insulate - and often referred to as 'hard-to-treat' homes – solid wall homes cannot accommodate typical modern energy efficiency measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation and may also include properties with no loft space. Solid wall homes can be insulated

either internally - with rigid insulation boards or a stud wall – or externally with cladding and rendering. Planning permission may be needed for external insulation if the property is listed or located within a conservation area. When a property is occupied external insulation can be an intrusive process. Furthermore, many people are resistant to having it done as it alters the character of the property.

Each approach has its own pros and cons; conditions when it's ideal or which make it unsuitable.

Many solid wall properties for rent are on landed estates and farms and often the owners are not keen to invest in them resulting in a predominance of empty properties. **There is a need to get the message across within communities as to the benefits of**

insulating solid wall properties and to overcome negative perceptions.

Work has recently taken place on externally cladding solid-wall properties at West Flodden Cottages on the Ford and Etal Estates in the far north of the county. The work also involved fitting of double glazing (funded by Ford and Etal Estates). The external wall cladding was largely grant funded by Northumberland County Council via Warmzone. The walls have been clad with 100mm rockwool which has then been rendered. As the rooms in the properties were small, insulation could not be carried out internally.

For those solid wall properties where external insulation is the only answer, there's a minimum grant of £3600.

The Calor Free Project



(Future of Rural Energy in England) is a rural energy advisorship programme, aimed at off-grid communities across England. This three-year

project is supported by Calor Gas and involves ACRE, the Rural Community Action Network and National Energy Action (NEA). It is delivered in this region through the three north-eastern Rural Community Councils, with Durham RCC as the regional 'lead'.

The project brings practical independent advice and information to households on fuel choices, energy efficient technologies, and carbon reduction measures - by working at a local level with communities most at risk of fuel poverty.

Fuel poverty maps - that include the measure for off mains gas - show that Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) E01027375 in Berwick district (Glendale/Wooler area) and LSOA E01027477 in Tynedale (Hexhamshire; Allen Valleys) are in the worst 8% of the country.

The first year of the project was geared around developing partnerships with the other two north east RCCs -

Durham and Tees Valley - and NEA, as well as developing and implementing a regional delivery plan. Time also needed to be spent on training staff in fuel poverty advice work.

The issue of fuel poverty – and the project itself - has been highlighted in the Hexham Courant newspaper; promoted at a Hexhamshire Community Forum meeting; and staff were involved with a series of events at Village Halls across the county arranged by Northumberland National Park Authority as part of their RECAP project (Renewable Energy Community Awareness Programme) which aims to raise awareness of what households can achieve in energy saving, renewable energy and heat production, as well as what can be achieved collectively at a community scale.

The project was further promoted at an Age UK (Northumberland)'s 'Health & Well-being' event in Hexham, where general fuel poverty information, advice and signposting were also given.

Local community events were held at Kirknewton and Branxton Village Halls earlier this year. Energy Monitors – on loan from Berwick Development Trust – were issued and their effectiveness –

relating to ease of use and in terms of making people more aware of their own energy use – were evaluated. A Calor FREE display was also sited for two weeks at the Berwick Voluntary Centre.

The Tynedale area is fortunate in having a dedicated Fuel Advice Worker employed by West Northumberland CAB and she has provided significant support and assistance in formulating our advice work in that area. This CAB project was the North East winner of the Footprint Award, a national award run by NEA. Proposals for joint working in the west of the county will be further explored during 2011/12.

This second year of the FREE project will see a closer tie-in with our generic fuel poverty work as well as a greater level of targeted activity with local communities in key areas. We will particularly focus on working to deliver some elements of "The Heat Is On" delivery plan – together with others, including Groundwork, and also working to support the County Council and the Warm Zone programme to get the message across within communities as to the benefits of insulating solid wall properties and to overcome negative perceptions.



The appearance of the homes hasn't changed much - the homes were originally painted white (left photo) and after external cladding (right photo) they don't look much different - though as the scaffold is still up it is not a complete comparison – but on the 'after' photo you can see the insulation prior to the final rendering.



The Warm Front scheme installs insulation and heating improvements in households which contain people on certain income-related benefits who live in properties that are poorly insulated and/or do not have a working central heating. You must own your home or rent it from a private landlord. The scheme now has a new set of eligibility criteria and started accepting new applications from 14 April 2011.

Qualifying households can get improvements worth up to £3,500 (£6,000 where oil central heating and other alternative technologies are recommended).

Grants are available for improvements such as:

- loft insulation
- draught-proofing
- cavity wall insulation
- hot water tank insulation
- gas, electric, liquid petroleum gas or oil heating
- glass-fronted fire - the scheme can convert your solid-fuel open fire to a glass-fronted fire



Warm Front will be replaced by Green Deal and Energy Company Obligations in 2012/13.



Warm Zone

WARM ZONE and the housing authorities in Northumberland have worked together for 8 years to target households in fuel poverty. In that time 85,000 properties have been surveyed and during 2010/11 3,376 insulation measures were implemented including cavity wall and loft insulation and draught proofing.

Now, Northumberland Warm Zone in conjunction with NCC, Scottish Energy and Southern Energy are offering grant funding towards insulating hard to heat

homes. They can offer assistance with hard to treat cavity walls where the home has a cavity but it is built with random stone - which is common within the county. This solution has no impact on the external view of the home as it is simply a compound which is injected in to the cavity but has high insulation values. The full cost of this to an average size home is around £2,500 but through Warmzone this could be free to people claiming benefits. For others the cost would be £129 - subject to a free no obligation survey. For those solid wall properties where external insulation is the only answer, there's a minimum grant of £3600.

More information can be obtained by contacting Northumberland Warm Zone on **01670 359636**.



The picture (above) shows a terrace of 4 bungalows at different stages of being insulated.

The far right shows a home not yet started; to its left is a property which is having a layer of insulation attached externally - like a blanket keeping it warm in cold weather. Next to that is a property that has had a thin coat of render applied over the insulation to offer protection against the weather; and finally the home on the left is the finished article. The process from start to finish can usually be done within one week. All homes need to be individually surveyed.



News from British Gas

- **BG's Gas Home Energy Plan** – the first to launch a Green Deal offer

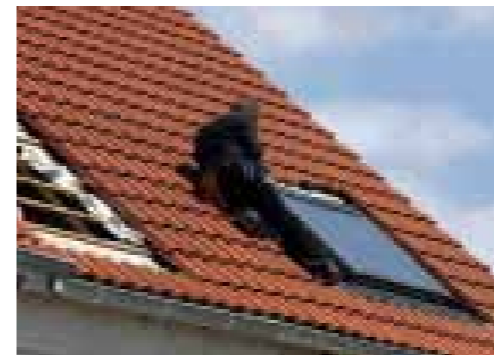
- **BG's Smart Grid project:** 14,000 homes and businesses in the north of England will be among the first in Britain to benefit from the introduction of a smarter electricity grid. Today's electricity grid was not designed to cope with widespread use of technology such as solar photovoltaic (PV) panels or electric cars which consume large amounts

of electricity. These technologies are already growing in popularity and solar panel sales are soaring so it is vital that the electricity grid can evolve to withstand these extra demands.

- **Community Energy:** British Gas is now able to provide significant funding to homes (social housing; privately owned and rented properties) installing external wall insulation where the

residents receive certain benefits or allowances. Funding is available for installations occurring after February 23rd 2011 and it is expected that this scheme will run in both 2011 and 2012.

(All installations must be complete by the end of 31st December 2012).



400 Homes Will Capture The Sun

Northumberland County Council will be fitting solar panels on a large number of properties in Northumberland over the next few months.

A major new investment and programme of work has been agreed with GB Renewable Energy, the renewables arm of a national construction company, to install solar PV panels, which will generate environmentally friendly 'green' electricity to around 400 domestic homes, as well as to 130 other Council owned education, sports, recreation and community buildings.

And that's not all – we are already looking for the next batch of homes to form a second project, which could follow hot on the heels of this one. If suitable funding for this type of renewables work could be secured then further projects of similar scale and scope would follow.

So far over 400 tenants have received letters letting them know that their homes have been identified as "most suitable" for solar PV panels. But, as not every home can practically have solar panels fitted (e.g. if the roof is an irregular shape; if the roof direction is not south facing - toward the mid-day sun, or is shaded by other buildings or trees), further detailed surveys will

still need to be carried out to ensure that solar PV is fitted only to the right properties.

Solar panels fitted to the roof of a property capture the sun's energy and convert it into electricity that can be used to run household appliances and lighting. The panels don't need direct sunlight to work – they can still generate some electricity on a cloudy day – although the panels work most effectively when they are fitted on a south facing roof.



With gas and electricity bills going up all the time, which can put a massive strain on a typical household income, we are always looking at ways of

reducing our residents' energy costs as much as possible. One of the main advantages of this scheme is that it will help reduce residents' electricity bills by providing an amount of free electricity to the home when it is being generated by the solar panels.

As a pilot for the larger County project 3 homes in Allerdean Close, Seaton Delaval were fitted with solar PV panels recently. The installations went well with little disruption to residents during the work. Testing and monitoring of this pilot scheme is on-going with valuable lessons being learned and experiences gained on this new technology.

This newly gained knowledge will help us ensure that these systems, together with the follow on 400 properties of the larger project, will operate at optimum levels, so that a large number of residents can reap the rewards of reduced electricity bills over the 25 year productive life of the panels.



According to Which? "energy tariffs are confusing and unfair. They're so complicated that customers can't work out if they're paying the right amount for their energy, and tiered rates mean that those who use less energy are actually paying more per unit."

By forcing energy companies to introduce a new simpler tariff we can make them fairer and help all energy customers get a better energy deal".

As part of their Affordable Energy Campaign they are running an email campaign to persuade the chief executive of Ofgem to tackle tariffs. The campaign is also tackling hidden charges and misleading deals and seeking better energy efficiency and microgeneration initiatives; better quality installation and education to make sure that people who want to make green improvements to their homes, make the right choices.

The power of 'Collaborative Consumption' and 'Collective Purchasing'

'Collaborative consumption'

is when a group of consumers share or trade something that they might have otherwise had to purchase separately.

For example, rather than buying their own car, people can join car sharing services such as:

NORTHUMBERLAND CARSHARE

As part of its commitment to reduce the number of cars on the roads, cut pollution and save money whilst also protecting the environment, Northumberland County Council (NCC) has teamed up with *liftshare*, the largest implementer of car-sharing systems in the UK, to set up this scheme. Accessed via its website..... www.northumberlandcareshare.com you can also find other useful travel and transport information.

The scheme is free to use and has been built and designed for every possible user - driver or passenger - or for people who are simply interested in finding an alternative to getting about.

COMMONWHEELS

www.commonwheels.org.uk

The County Council currently works in partnership with this car club operator on two car club vehicles in Northumberland - at Wylam and Prudhoe. Commonwheels members pay an annual fee to NCC, who provides and maintains the vehicle(s) and then pay by the hour and mile for each trip that



they undertake. Car clubs like this can offer financial savings for low mileage users and families considering buying a second car.

'Collective purchasing'

refers to groups of consumers who combine their purchasing power to buy goods or services together. When individual consumers club together they can increase their buyer power in any given market, allowing them to negotiate a lower price and/or better quality service.

In relation to energy, the interest in forming energy-buying groups is increasing. With the rising cost of energy there is a corresponding

need to buy energy as cheaply – and use it as efficiently - as possible. In Northumberland there are some excellent examples of this being put into practice.



West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium supports community buildings and village halls in West Northumberland. In Spring 2011 the Consortium launched 'Northumberland Energy Club' offering village and community buildings and other businesses, such as shops and pubs, the opportunity of joining together county-wide to combine their buying power to enable cheaper prices for electricity, gas and telephone to be negotiated. Membership is free and savings could be huge, as all members work towards a common renewal date.

The Consortium has combined with LSI Utility Broker Ltd to scour the markets to find the best deals and to harmonise contract termination dates so that bulk buying on the markets can achieve even greater savings.

More information on the Consortium's website www.westnorthumberlandcbc.org.uk

Oil Buying Groups



North Tyne Oil And Diesel Purchasing Group

arranges bulk deliveries for its members – currently around 30 – from across Tarsset, Donkleywood, Falstone and Wark – including family homes, village halls, farms and a pub.

Since 2009 deliveries have been arranged every 4-5 weeks. The collective has placed monthly orders ranging between 10,000 and 30,000 litres – that upper figure comprising a combined order of white diesel, red diesel and kerosene placed in December 2010. The group's co-ordinator pulls the orders together and then searches out the best deals on the market – each member is responsible for paying their own fuel bill.

As well as saving money the group is helping to save the environment too – by helping suppliers rationalise their delivery plans there are fewer tankers making the long journey up the remote Tyne valley every week.

ACRE, Citizen's Advice and the Federation of Petroleum Suppliers have produced a publication "*Best Practice for Oil Buying Groups*" which provides practical information to help communities set up oil buying groups. It also explains how oil is traded, things

to consider before setting up an oil buying group and ideas on how to run and manage a group once established. It also highlights some pitfalls to avoid and helps assess what is the best option for a community. The publication can be downloaded from our website.



Citizens Advice has also produced a range of guidance and tips to help communities in setting up and running oil clubs (also known as oil-syndicates, oil buying groups or oil-cooperatives) and has a video on this topic on its website.

The Allen Valleys Oil Buying Co-Operative

was set up only a couple of months ago.

Originally an idea by community group **Sustainable Allendale**, volunteer Lauren Langton came forward to co-ordinate the scheme.

Working out of Fawside, an Allendale-based organisation which supports local businesses, she already has more than 90 people registered for the scheme of which 32 were able to be included on the first order in September of 32,000 litres.

One of the case studies highlighted in "*Best Practice for Oil Buying Groups*" is the countywide scheme operated by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

The scheme negotiates with oil companies to get the best price for over 400 members and co-ordinates deliveries to reduce the carbon footprint of those deliveries.

Community Action Northumberland is looking into the potential to set up a similar scheme in Northumberland based on the Oxfordshire model.

Look out for further news on this in due course.

Buy Early For Winter

ACRE, in collaboration with the DECC, Defra, Consumer Focus, Citizen's Advice and the Federation of Petroleum Suppliers are encouraging heating oil customers to buy early to avoid running out of fuel this winter. Stocking up early by purchasing oil in late summer and early autumn has a number of advantages: the price of heating oil tends to be lower, customer demand for oil is lower and suppliers have spare delivery capacity. Customers who order at the last minute run the risk of paying higher prices and waiting longer for a delivery.

One of the busiest times for oil suppliers is the run up to Christmas, which means there are longer delivery delays and customers risk being left without heating. Last winter's adverse weather conditions made fuel deliveries difficult and when temperatures dropped it pushed oil orders to twice the seasonal norm. Customers who let their tanks run critically low during the summer risked running out completely and were left without heating during this bitterly cold spell.

Sustainable Transport

Electric vehicles offer significant environmental benefits compared to existing internal combustion engine vehicles. They have zero tail-pipe emissions and a much reduced noise output compared with conventional petrol/diesel cars.

"Plugged in Places" is a national programme run by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV). In the north east the project is called "Charge your Car" - funded by One North East, OLEV, public and private partners:-

- ▶ Northumberland County Council is supporting this region wide project to install over 1300 electric vehicle charging points in the north east over the next two years.
- ▶ Local environmental group Wylam Green Street has installed a charging

post in the old north station car park - one of the country's first such community-installed and operated initiatives. In addition, electricity to the point is supplied free of charge by green electricity provider Good Energy.

- ▶ Northumberland National Park Authority opened England's first electric vehicle charge points based in a protected area - along Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site
- ▶ Haggerston Castle Caravan Park became the first holiday centre in the country to introduce a charging point for electric cars, installed by the site's (then) owners Haven Holidays.



The WATBike project started in March 2010 with support from the Northumberland Coast 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB).

The project offers a range of cycle activities utilising WATBus minibuses and bespoke bike trailers to transport groups of cyclists to and from destinations in Northumberland.

WATBike offers regular weekly guided leisure rides giving cyclists the opportunity to enjoy many parts of Northumberland safely and with confidence. It also provides bespoke rides for any group, employer or school and transport for self programming cycle groups by minibus and bike trailer to any destination in Britain. This year WATBike is piloting an innovative bike training programme aimed at improving the knowledge and confidence of novice cyclists and covering bike maintenance, route planning, and practical on and off-road riding. By offering group transport for cyclists it is encouraging people to take up an environmentally friendly leisure activity and it reduces the use of private cars to enjoy the more remote and beautiful parts of Northumberland.

For more information, contact Colin Hall at WATBus, Unit 1, Sleekburn Business Centre, West Sleekburn, Bedlington, Northumberland. NE22 7DD. Tel: 01670 522999 or email colin.watbus@yahoo.co.uk

Community Energy / Renewable Energy Projects



Breamish Hall, Powburn

has two air source heat pumps which can provide more than twice the amount of energy than is required to operate them.

The project, developed by NEA and funded by a Community Foundation's Local Action on Global Issues grant, has been able to bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the local community.

As part of the project, NEA has appointed one of the local residents to become Powburn's very own first Energy Champion - who is now able to advise local residents on the importance of energy efficiency in the home as well as providing advice on the pumps in the village hall.

Shilbottle Wind Turbine

has now been operating for a year but the output has been somewhat disappointing.

The generator has a nominal output of 6kw but the max output recorded, in recent gales, was 2.3kw. During last winter a number of dead birds were found in the area around the turbine - presumably because they had flown into the revolving blades.

The turbine has also been a magnet for vandals, with bottles, empty crisp packets containing pebbles, sticks and other items having been thrown at the turbine.

Thankfully no apparent damage to the turbine has resulted and no injuries to the perpetrators have been reported.



Ingram Village Hall

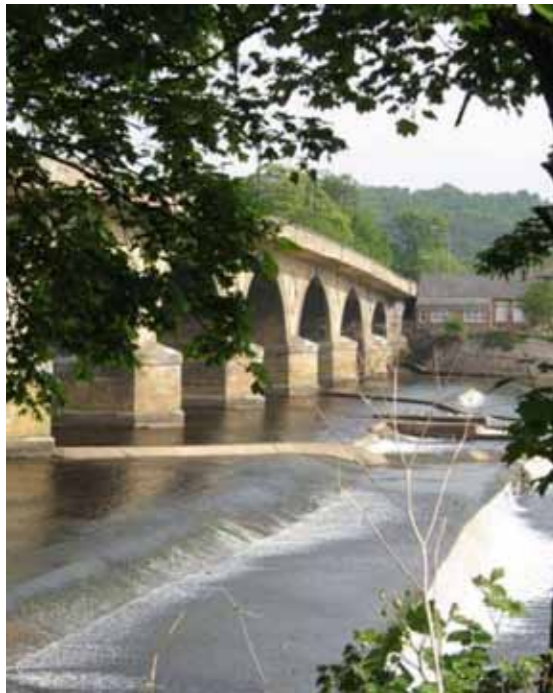
has undergone a complete refurbishment over the past couple of years including having eco-friendly technology installed to provide all of its power needs

The building has been fitted with solar panels to generate electricity, a pump which extracts air from outside to warm an under-floor heating system and energy-saving insulation.

As one of only 14 projects in the country to win British Gas Green Streets funding, it was able to extend the project into the Breamish Valley community - 22 homes have been provided with energy-saving light bulbs, radiator panels, loft insulation and electricity monitors.

Now the Hall is making money by selling excess electricity back to the National Grid.





Hexham River Hydro

...is a joint initiative by Hexham Community Partnership and Transition Tynedale aimed at developing a 100 kW community hydro power generation plant on the River Tyne.

The objective is not just to generate renewable electricity, but to use the generation facility as an education and awareness-raising tool for residents and visitors alike, and to use the income to secure long-term community activities in Hexham and its environs.

The project recently topped the first round of the British Gas/Energysure poll to be one of 100 groups competing for the chance to win £100,000 of funding. The results of a Feasibility Study have been examined - with two alternative designs to consider. Stakeholder consultations and drop-in events took place in the summer and the project is now seeking funding for the next phase of the project and a bid to Energysure is being prepared for the next round - so local voting power will be called on again.

Tynedale Renewable Energy Trail

... is a celebration of new clean energy technologies.

It is intended for casual use and to be a resource for school and university projects, for family outings, for community groups and for the public sector to experience new technologies first hand.

Above all it aims to inspire people to save energy and to install their own renewable energy equipment.

Case studies on 16 sites are available to download from the CAN website.



BEST (Belford Energy Saving Together)

...provides opportunities for key community organisations to work together to make Belford a greener place in which to live.

In April 09 they secured a £5,000 Energy Saving Trust grant which funded, amongst other things...

- ▶ commissioning energy audits on 3 community buildings
- ▶ establishing a low energy bulb library
- ▶ purchase Eco-eye monitors and shower-drops
- ▶ carrying out thermal imaging on 8 village properties

BEST is working with local community organisations to install PV solar panels on their buildings' roofs, helping reduce Belford's carbon footprint, saving on energy bills and bringing in money to benefit the community. It has reached the second round of the British Gas/ Energysure funding poll and will now compete with other national projects to win £100,000.

It is hoped that the experience gained from installing solar panels will enable community organisations to play a role in encouraging others to adopt energy saving and/ or generating practices. The group is also organising for a Tetrapak recycling container to be located at the village recycling point.

Community Buildings Energy Event

28th October 2011
Lowick Village Hall
9:30 - 3:30

In partnership with CAN, Groundwork North East is running an energy & waste training event on the 28th October 2011 at Lowick Village Hall (4 miles west of the A1, 10 miles south of Berwick) for people who are involved in running community buildings.

The event includes practical information on saving money by reducing energy use, generating energy and reducing water use and waste. There are also some energy saving freebies to take away and lunch!

The event is supported by One North East and the Third Sector Capacity Fund.

To book a place please email christinenicholls@ca-north.org.uk or telephone 01289 304141 please state which community building you represent.



PlanLoCaL is a CSE project - a suite of resources including films, a resource pack and website (www.planlocal.org.uk) which aims to support communities and groups that are planning for low carbon living.

The pack itself is an A4 binder full of exercises, images, case studies, technical information, support on running events and help on setting up as a group. Interspersing factual information with participatory exercises, it's designed to empower communities to make decisions and plan projects on their own. You can

order a free copy via the PlanLoCaL website.

It has been praised as 'strongly engaging and effective, and cited as a model for community-oriented websites by community activists.

The video section contains 49 short films covering a huge range of topics including introductions to the different renewable energy technologies, project management, funding, dealing with planning, consulting with the community and heritage issues.

You can also see case studies of 11 communities that have successfully got renewable energy projects off the ground

and, in some cases, are generating cash to be ploughed back into other neighbourhood benefits. The groups explain the challenges they face as well as the results they achieved.

The videos can also be viewed on the PlanLoCaL site...www.planlocal.org.uk/ videos.



Resources

The following resources, publications, guides - referred to in this edition of CAN News - can be accessed via our website: www.ca-north.org.uk/rural/energy



Adapting to climate change: a guide for local councils and community groups, wanting to take action to adapt to climate change, with information on some of the future risks and opportunities.

Hydropower: A guide for you and your community produced by the Environment Agency, DECC, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Energy Saving Trust.



Energy for Business: Demonstration Renewable Energy Projects

Northumberland Renewable Energy Group (NREG) is a public, private and third sector partnership which seeks to identify and address the barriers to uptake of renewable energy technology in Northumberland through partnership working.

This brochure - the first of two produced by NREG - seeks to showcase and encourage others to realise the benefits of low or zero carbon technology, to help others choose the most appropriate technology for their situation and to avoid any pitfalls which may be encountered during the process. It includes summary information on each of fourteen projects grouped by technology so that you can easily access one or more examples of the technology in question.

NCC / NSP - The Heat Is On
> Framework >
Delivery Plan > DVD



Tynedale Renewable Energy Trail
16 projects / case studies (PDFs)

Solid Wall Insulation - leaflet -
extracted from EST website



Best Practice for Oil Buying Groups produced by ACRE, Citizen's Advice and the Federation of Petroleum Suppliers.



Get Generating - a guide produced by ACRE in partnership with CPRE, CRC and NALC which provides an overview of community based renewable energy options for rural community groups, local councils and individuals.

Learning from Leaders is the second of the NREG publications - and seeks to help communities avoid potential pitfalls and perils when developing a renewable energy project for the first time.



Electronic copies of CAN News

If you want to receive electronic copies of Community News as well as, or instead of, hard copies, email sueandrew@ca-north.org.uk or subscribe directly via the website on www.ca-north.org.uk

Concessions to Surface Water Drainage Charges for Community Groups

Northumbrian Water is currently in the process of consulting with customers about the future of concessions for community organisations for surface water drainage charges.

Guidance issued by Defra in 2010 requires Northumbrian Water to consult with customers and their representatives to determine whether a concession is required and if customers are willing to pay a cross subsidy to support a concession for community organisations. In particular this consultation is required to explore the views of customers who would not benefit from a concession, and who would have to pay a slightly higher charge to subsidise community organisations.

In order to gather customer's views, Northumbrian Water are carrying out a representative market research survey across the North East during October. In addition, a consultation will be posted on their website to enable customers to express their views. To enable the interim concession to become permanent, the results of this consultation will need to show that there is clear support from customers. If the wider customer base does not show a willingness to subsidise community organisations the interim concession will have to be removed.

As part of the consultation process, Northumbrian Water held a Customer Forum event on the 9th September to which a number of regional organisations representing different groups of customers were invited. These organisations represented both customers who would and would not benefit from a concession.

The forum was chaired by the Consumer Council for Water, which is the statutory representative for all water and sewerage customers. The event sought to understand what people considered should be covered during the consultation and provided an opportunity for Northumbrian Water to understand concerns raised at the meeting and incorporate them, where possible, in their approach to the consultation.

A second meeting of this group is proposed for November to discuss the results of the market research after which Northumbrian Water hope to be able to make a decision on the future of the interim concession.

In the meantime Northumbrian Water is still trying to encourage community groups to register so that they can be included in the interim concessionary scheme.

For further information visit www.nwl.co.uk/bSurfacewatercharges.aspx

What We Do

Community Action Northumberland provides a range of advice and support services for community and voluntary groups to enable people throughout Northumberland to overcome disadvantages and improve their quality of life. These services include:

- Funding advice
- Management committee development
- Advice on constitutions, charity law and legal structures
- Support for village halls/community buildings
- Project management support
- Local regeneration
- Support for parish councils
- Employment services
- Production of community newspaper

Additionally CAN seeks to

- work in partnership to facilitate the development of new, and to support existing networks of local voluntary and community groups, in order to enable them to be a mechanism for developing collaborative work across the sector
- influence and work with decision-makers to provide, with partners, conduits for the diverse views of the local voluntary and community sector to be voiced and heard within the decision-making structures, regionally and nationally.

CAN is anxious to ensure that it effectively performs these roles and therefore operates a process of continuous evaluation. This requires feedback from our users and partners. Any comments on our performance are not only welcomed but essential to help us to make sure that we are meeting the overall needs of users and maintaining our quality standards.

CAN News is published on a quarterly basis – see the next copy deadline below. It contains useful information on sources of advice and funding, helps to alert people to changes in legislation or service provision which may affect them, and passes on ideas and news from one community to another. Contributions and items of informative and newsworthy value are welcomed.

Copy deadline for the next issue is Friday 7 December.

Please get in touch with the Editor, Louise Currie, at Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1PY or email items direct to info@ca-north.org.uk.

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