

Community Action Northumberland NEWS

Merry Christmas

WINTER ISSUE - December 2010

CAN - supporting voluntary action and communities throughout Northumberland

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Issues of Community Action News are fully recyclable

CAN's offices will close at mid-day on Friday 24 December and will re-open on Tuesday 4 January. We wish all of our readers a very Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Beef-up for rural work

It is ironic that Northumberland is England's most rural of counties, and yet it now has one of the least-developed frameworks of structures, policies and programmes to promote and support rural development. The excellent work of the NSP's Rural Group and Rural Team (which emerged out of the former Rural Development Programme) came to an abrupt halt in March 2009. The North East Rural Affairs Forum (formerly the NE Rural Contact Group) ceased to be a partnership of 'do-ers' in 2005 and it is, now anyway, facing closure. The regional bodies of government, GONE, and ONE, together with their rural teams, are being closed-down. The latest European LEADER programmes are somewhat disconnected from other relevant bodies which are active in the rural areas. One hundred years after the formation of the

Development Commission, the Coalition Government is closing down what remains of its successor body, the Commission for Rural Communities. And yet....

- There are still communities in rural Northumberland without mains water or electricity
- The County Council recently announced the possibility of a new wave of rural school closures
- Young people are having to leave the area due to a lack of affordable housing
- Post offices, shops and pubs continue to close
- The escalation in fuel prices will make everyday long-distance travel to jobs and to services even more unaffordable
- Mobile phones are now part of everyday life, but significant tracts of

rural Northumberland have no signal

- The availability of Broadband is both patchy and unreliable

.... and so on.

We in CAN cannot right these wrongs, but we can and should do more to highlight rural issues and help develop appropriate solutions. Encouraged by the North East Rural Summit, which we co-hosted with our fellow RCCs (rural community councils) at Slaley in November, we will make common cause with those bodies that share these concerns, and we will work harder to promote good initiatives and to influence policies and programmes to meet the rural situation, from Holywell to Gilsland and Kirknewton, and all points in-between.

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In this edition of CAN News, we are highlighting what is now one very basic but necessary public utility: Broadband. So much of everyday life depends on access to reliable and efficient ICT, which much of rural Northumberland sadly lacks. What does exist is the product of an effective but former alliance between ONE and the NSP Rural Group, We must now develop new solutions, examples of which are described in the following pages.

Street Trading

Earlier this year, the County Council launched a consultation on a new, county-wide set of policies and procedures relating to the regulation of Street Trading. The consultations generated widespread anxieties about the possible adverse impact on relatively unproblematical everyday activities: mobile shops, community fund-raising

events, garden-gate and farm-gate produce sales, and farmers' markets. As a result, NCC are looking to amend the proposals substantially. We are working with staff from NCC's Licensing Team, to develop a regime which will exempt the majority of these activities from regulation, to focus on the more-controversial activities. A revised draft should be available in January or February.

Buried Treasurer found Alive!



Training at Chatton Village Hall

The perennial chore of producing the year end accounts for the annual meeting has been banished for ever! No more searching for the treasurer under a mountain of paper! The BOSS Project's 'Easy Accounts' training has already set free two dozen community group treasurers who have mastered (in less than an hour!) a simple computer programme which produces the annual statement of accounts in 30 seconds! Unbelievable? Read on!

Peter Bryan, the BOSS Project co-ordinator, boasts that 'Anyone can do this!' – absolutely no accountancy skills required as long as you know the difference between 'income' and 'expenditure'. The programme does demand diligence – you have to input each transaction on a screen form which resembles a bank paying in slip. That is all you have to do – the programme does the rest: periodic reports for committee, comparison of actual income and expenditure with your planned budget, who paid what when and a host of other useful detail which will satisfy the fussiest of auditors.

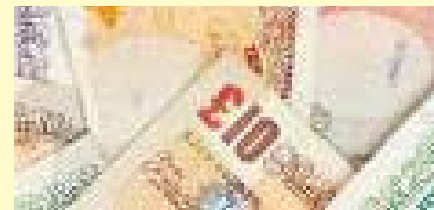
Not only is this accounts programme very easy to use, it will deliver everything that charity law requires in record keeping and annual accounts. And your auditor will just love it – checking your accounts will be a doddle! There might even be a race for the job!



Well, you might say, if it is that good it will probably cost more than we can afford. And you would be wrong! The programme, a sample set of accounts for you to practise with and a user guide specially written for community groups is free to those attending a Boss Project 'Easy Accounts' Training Workshop. Workshops lasts 2 hours and participants have the use of a laptop for hands on experience of the programme. There is a £10 booking fee per person. For details of a Workshop near you contact Louise Currie from CAN – louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk or phone 01670 517178.

We have already run two successful training events for Treasurers of community buildings/village halls with the assistance and co-operation of North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium and West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium, in Chatton village Hall and Newton and Bywell Community Hall respectively.

NCC Budget



In the previous edition of CAN News, we reported on the challenges facing Northumberland County Council to achieve a balanced budget, in the face of continuing cuts in support from the government. On a core annual revenue budget of around £300m, cuts of £29.8m had been made at the time of LGR (Local Government Reorganisation – April 2009), followed by £16.6m in 2010-11, and a further within-year cut of £6.9m (plus some capital spending cuts) announced last summer.

For next year, (2011-12) NCC had planned cautiously to make a further £30m of cuts. However, following the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review announcements in October, it now appears that the cuts may have to be significantly worse: anything between £43m and £60m, from April 2011 (the uncertainty over these figures is due to the time-lag between the 'high level' announcements made by the Chancellor, and the details for each local authority being given by the DCLG several months later).

This disturbing news has required a re-think by NCC, and it is now unlikely that consultation over specific proposals can start until early January. We have to assume that there will be some very controversial and unpalatable proposals, and that the room for manoeuvre during the consultation process will be limited.

As we have said previously, there is significant opportunity for communities, parish councils and voluntary organisations to develop and deliver new solutions. However, there needs to be a supportive framework of policies, practices, resources and relationships to make this work and the County Council has already lost a significant number of experienced and knowledgeable senior staff with the right outlook and track-record. Those of us in the Community support bodies - such as CAN, CVS' and NALC – will need to forge new relationships with a much-reduced public sector not only next year, but for the foreseeable future.

Music Licence changes

The UK government has amended the music licensing rules for not for profit organisations. The new rules will come into effect on the 1st January 2011 and will mean that many community buildings and village halls will require an additional music licence.

These changes will bring music licensing in line with the rest of Europe. Not for profit organisations using **recorded music** (records, tapes, CDs, radio but not live performance) will need a licence from **Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL)**. These changes will provide remuneration to performers and record companies.

Currently no licence is needed and no royalties are payable to PPL when the public performance is beneficial to, or part of, the activities of an organisation whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise concerned with the

advancement of religion, education or social welfare. The not for profit sector comprises, amongst others, charities, community halls, uniformed youth groups, voluntary organisations, social enterprises, student union nightclubs and government and local authority buildings.

The law will be changing on January 1st 2011, but PPL is giving a grace period of one year for charities to allow them time to adjust to the new arrangements. Committees already pay a fee to the Performing Right Society; they will now have to pay a fee for the Phonographic Performance Licence as well. **Payment of fees will start on 1st January 2012.** – so organisations are advised to carry on as they are for the time being.

Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) says that their aim is to negotiate a zero rate tariff for very small groups whose bill for playing music would

significantly increase. Please note that the details and final decisions on the actual tariffs and how the system will work have not yet been taken

The CSLMG (Community Sector Law Monitoring Group) of which ACRE is part, are still negotiating with PPL to try and obtain the best possible scenario. It is very unlikely that a zero tariff will be available and the lowest tariff will probably be £40 plus VAT. Both fees will be collected by PRS. The licence will cover the hall - and therefore small charitable groups that use the halls will not have to get their own licences. They will not be exempt - they will just be covered by the licence that the building holds. The detail has not yet been clarified and ACRE is still talking with PPL.

We will inform you as soon as any further information is available.

CAN AGM



AGM panel: Bob Langley, Jane Pannell, George Scott and Ray Butler.

Representatives from a wide range of voluntary and community organisations, public bodies and other supporters took part in CAN's 59th AGM at Stannington Village Hall on 3 November. Instead of a guest speaker or case-study presentations, participants were treated to a Question Time session, with a panel composed of Jane Pannell (former Berwick Borough Council Chief

Executive), Jane Hart (CAN's Senior Community Development Officer), Ray Butler (NALC Committee member, and Chairman of Choppington Parish Council) and Bob Langley (Chairman of the NSP and former Archdeacon of Lindisfarne). The panel responded instantly, thoughtfully and, at times, wittily, to a wide range of questions, covering the state of Northumberland, the challenges

facing local councils, affordable housing, CAN's services, and people's favourite places.

The formal business was overseen by CAN's President, the Duke of Northumberland. George Scott presented the annual report, and paid tribute to those trustees who were standing-down from the Executive Committee: Anne James (Wark on Tyne), Sonja Bailes (Haydon Bridge) and Bob Langley (ex-Diocese of Newcastle). On behalf of the Honorary Treasurer, Barbara McKie presented the audited accounts for 2009-10, copies of which are available from CAN's office.

The meeting agreed to some minor amendments to the schedule of organisation in membership of CAN, which forms part of CAN's constitution. In presenting the amendments, CAN's Director, David Francis reported on plans to alter the trustee arrangements by creating a new charitable company. It was hoped that proposals would be made to the Spring Meeting, in May 2011.

Sally Black led the vote of thanks.

How are rural areas disadvantaged?

Rural Broadband Briefing Paper
Hilary Talbot, Centre for Rural Economy

Many rural parts of Britain have an inadequate telecommunications infrastructure for broadband services. Some areas have no broadband at all and in others the supply is inferior to that in urban areas.

In terms of the step change to Next Generation Access (NGA) already underway in some parts of Britain there is little market interest in providing for rural areas.

The Analysis Mason 2010 report for the Department of Communities and Local Government assessed that 87% of rural areas would be at high risk of not having NGA in 2012 compared with 22% of urban areas.

Provision of high speed broadband to rural areas is not just about equitable distribution of services, but also about enabling rural businesses, households and communities to realise their potential and thereby bring wider benefits to society.

Early visionaries may have been naïve in the futures they foresaw, but they were right to accentuate the transformational

potential of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for addressing remoteness.

ICT could make a substantial contribution to: improvements in the provision of many services in rural areas including diagnosing health problems remotely, distance learning, home-working and telemarketing; the competitiveness of many rural businesses; and the green agenda by enabling people to work more readily from home and reducing the need to travel for some services and provisions. The full briefing paper is available from www.newcastle.ac.uk/cre

Fontburn Internet Project



Fontburn

The Fontburn Internet Project was set up in 2007 as a way of providing a broadband service in a remote rural area. Fontburn is 16 km from the Rothbury Exchange and so cannot receive broadband through a phone line. The system involves leasing two BT lines just north of Morpeth and relaying the signal via a wireless link to 2 hubs at Fontburn which then relay wirelessly to the members. One of these hubs was set up at a remote National Trust farm to serve another farm with no sight-lines to

other buildings in Fontburn. This was the most problematic relay as the National Trust farm is powered by a generator making the link rather erratic.

At times when signal strength is good and not too many members are online, the system provides a download speed of up to 1.5Mbps which is at the slow end of broadband speeds. Initially a satellite system was used, however this proved to be unreliable and slow and is now used as a back-up.

The project has 11 members including 4 farms, a cafe and farm visitor centre and other small home businesses. Membership would be higher if not for the high cost of the service: at nearly £30 per month it is at least double the cost of standard broadband and members still need to pay for a separate phone line to receive calls as mobile coverage is patchy and the system cannot support Skype. The project received funding from OneNorthEast which was paid to the service providers, Educom, and subsidised the equipment. New users coming to the project would need to spend around £200 to purchase the equipment.

Future developments for the project are to be looked at including working with Northumberland County Council and Northumbrian Water to improve and extend the service.

Members remain very enthusiastic about their project. *"It hasn't always been straightforward by any means," says project secretary Louise Kirkwood, "There have been all kinds of frustrations and difficulties due to the remoteness of our location, weather and so on. You have simply got to have this kind of access to survive and make the most of life in the modern world. It makes an enormous difference to people in a remote rural community such as Fontburn and we would definitely not be without it now."*

A legal right to Broadband?

Since 1st of July 2010 residents of Finland have had a legal right to at least a 1Mbps broadband connection and by 2015 the Finnish Government wants each resident to have access to 100Mbps. In the UK the Government is aiming to have access to superfast broadband for every community by 2015 but have not identified a minimum speed.

Broadband Delivery UK – Making the case for Northumberland

Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) has been created within the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) as a delivery vehicle for the Government's policies on broadband. The aim of BDUK is to achieve the goal of best superfast broadband network in Europe and to ensure that by 2015 every household and business can access a basic level of broadband.



BDUK have selected four rural areas to pilot the next generation of high speed broadband (Cumbria, Highlands

& Islands, North Yorkshire and Herefordshire) these include some of the most remote and geographically challenging parts of the UK.

Although Northumberland was not chosen as a pilot area there is an

opportunity for future development as £530m is available for broadband development over the next four years. Councillor Tom Brechany, executive member for regeneration at Northumberland County Council said "The council is keen for all Northumberland residents to have better connections and improved connection speeds. Locally we are working with a range of agencies and have sought the views of local businesses, residents and organisations and will include these in our business proposal for Northumberland."

Northumberland County Council is drawing together a proposal for intervention in the county and will be seeking wider support from all sections of the community in order to make the case for Northumberland.

It is hoped that this will lead to investment across all those parts of the county where the private sector is unlikely to tread without public sector support.

Carrier pigeons are faster than rural broadband



A stunt to show how slow rural broadband is in some areas was carried out by an internet service provider in Yorkshire.

Carrier pigeons won the race against rural broadband after delivering a video file stored on a digital card more quickly than a computer was able to upload the same video.

The pigeons were released from a farm near Beverley reaching their destination in Skegness, about 75 miles away, within an hour and a quarter.

Meanwhile, the five-minute video upload which was started at the moment of release had only managed to upload 24 per cent of a 300MB file within that time.

Although this was a publicity stunt it may be worth considering how your broadband service would compare.

Bits and Bytes

Bits – form all digital data as a 0 or 1. Bit is an abbreviation of Binary Digit. All network speed is measured in bits.

Byte – 8 bits make a byte. A byte is the amount of space needed to store a single letter or number. All documents are measured in bytes.

A **Kilobit** is 1024 bits, a Megabit is 1024 x 1024 bits.

A **Kilobyte** is 1024 bytes, a Megabyte is 1024 x 1024 bytes and a Gigabyte is 1024 x 1024 x 1024 bytes.

These are often rounded to a thousand, a million and a billion.

Mbps is short for Megabits per Second and is the usual measurement for broadband speed.

So a 4 Megabyte document downloaded over a 2Mbps broadband connection will, in theory, take 16 seconds. A 56Kbps dial up connection would take around 10 minutes.

A 30 minute video file would be around 300 Megabytes and would take around 21 minutes on a 2Mbps connection, on dial-up it would take over 12 hours. The download rate will be affected by many factors and in reality will take longer than the times stated above.

Broadband Surveys



Stocksfield: Photo used with permission from Nick Hall

One of the early issues identified by the recently established Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP) Broadband Task Group was the need for local intelligence on which areas of the county experience problems with broadband access. Although maps are published which identify areas which can or cannot receive a service, the networks do not always perform as expected which means the reality on the ground does not always equate to the broadband providers' maps. Therefore it was proposed to survey users in order to identify gaps and areas of the county with slow broadband services.

The Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA), as part of its recent residents' survey, asked whether people had a broadband connection and at what speed. As a result of the NSP meetings Northumberland County Council agreed to run a further survey, with similar questions, in order to expand on the NNPA data across the county.

This consisted of an online survey (with an option for those without an internet connection of phoning the County Council) undertaken between August and October 2010. 575 responses were received, of which 464 had a broadband connection and 90 did not (21 did not answer that question).

Of the 90 that did not have a connection, the majority (73) stated that this was because broadband was not available in their area. These areas include not only very remote areas, but also more-accessible communities such as parts of Stocksfield, Widdrington Moor and Shadfen (near Morpeth) Respondents were also asked to undertake a speed test on their connection. The results were as follows:

Less than 0.25 Mbps	42
0.25 - 0.49 Mbps	93
0.5 - 0.99 Mbps	77
1.0 - 1.49 Mbps	29
1.5 - 1.99 Mbps	43
2.0 - 4.99 Mbps	97
5.0 Mbps or over	69
No response*	122
Total	575

*including the 90 without any connection

If 2 Mbps is taken to be the minimum acceptable broadband speed then while 166 respondents were above that level, 284 were not.

The worst speeds (less than 0.5 Mbps) were found throughout the county, including towns such as Blyth, Ashington, Hexham and Berwick.

Next steps

Responses can still be added to the survey by visiting www.northumberland-broadband.net

The data will be combined with the NNPA survey data, and any additional responses received, to provide a map showing average speeds for the county.

This information will then be used in discussions with BT around infrastructure improvements and to inform some of the other activities underway (see other parts of this issue). The data can also be used to make a case to secure additional funding to fill gaps and improve speeds in Northumberland. It is therefore important to make us aware of any problems you experience with broadband services, especially if you are in an area not identified above.

NSP Broadband Task Group

The Broadband Task Group came about as a result of Access to Services being prioritised at a North Area Partnership stakeholder event in November 2009, the West Area Partnership had also identified the same issue. The Broadband Task Group is being led by the North Area Partnership, with the West Area Partnership leading on transport issues.

The group provides an opportunity for information to be shared about schemes, projects and services that aim to improve the connectivity of Northumberland. The sharing of information will hopefully lead to more joined-up working and a better use of existing resources.

One of the first tasks the group undertook was to identify areas of the county that have poor or no broadband connection, this was done through a survey and by partners providing information that they had already collected.

With the potential developments highlighted in this edition of CAN News the task group will continue to have an important role in helping the various partners make Northumberland better connected.



Electronic copies of CAN News



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Project NEON

Project NEON (North East Open Networks) is a fund of £2m provided by ONE North East through Single Programme funding which is to be allocated across two or more Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband projects.

Northumberland County Council submitted a business case to the NEON fund to put Next Generation Access Broadband into communities in North & West Northumberland. NCC did this by joining up with Gateshead and Durham Councils and Cybermoor in Alston in a joint bid led by Gateshead where Northumberland would stand to receive £800k for a project based on Berwick. A panel at ONE North East are due to give a decision soon.

The project will result in the following improvements if approved:

15 street cabinets to link around 6000 businesses and households by super fast fibre in the Berwick area - cabinet sites are yet to be determined but each needs to be within 100m of a BT street cabinet

and have an electrical supply so specific locations will be constrained. It is hoped to cover the bulk of Berwick with fast fibre.

These cabinets will each be linked to BT cabinets and then back over fibre to the local exchange and into NCC Northnet equipment and then over the NCC

network and onto Internet Service Providers.

Gateshead Council will be responsible for procuring development and marketing of a hub where ISPs are able to plug into the Northnet and other networks.

It is hoped that the Gateshead hub into which Northumberland could plug into would be built on a national standard that will set a common format for major ISPs so that they are more likely to make services available in deeper rural areas.

There will be a need to stimulate the local markets in areas that are part of the project. So in Berwick NCC will work with social landlords, business forums and community groups etc to raise awareness of the super fast broadband services that will be available. The aim is to achieve 20% of households over a 10 year period.

These developments all depend on approval from ONE North East.



£132m Cornwall Connection Project

Cornwall is setting the pace on rural broadband and is hoping to become one of the best connected locations in the world.

The project will see a range of different broadband technologies deployed. Fibre broadband will be the most prevalent and will give between 80 and 90 per cent of local businesses and homes access to super-fast speeds.

Businesses and homes outside the fibre footprint will also receive faster speeds than today through a mix of alternative technologies such as advanced copper, wireless and satellite broadband. These technologies are more suitable to deploy than fibre broadband in the remotest and hardest to reach locations.

BT said the £132 million project sets an example to other rural areas, showing what can be achieved through partnering and public funding. BT is providing £78.5 million and there will be European Regional Development Fund investment of up to £53.5 million. This investment has the potential to transform the local economy by boosting local business productivity.

It will also help to attract a more diverse range of high growth, high value companies to the area thanks to the world leading connectivity on offer. For local businesses, the super-fast network will underpin the introduction of many new services and applications. Users will be able to run multiple bandwidth-hungry applications at the same time and send and receive large

amounts of data much more quickly and efficiently. Computer processing and storage of files will also become more sophisticated and secure using 'cloud computing' technology. There will be faster back-up of computer systems and wider use of high quality videoconferencing within firms and between them and their customers.

The roll-out will begin immediately and run until 2014 with the first customers being connected early in 2011. The project will be supported by a major marketing programme, skills programmes and support to ensure businesses make the most of the new technology.

Can Northumberland follow Cornwall's lead?

Northumberland Uplands Broadband Project



Shilbottle

Northumberland National Park Authority (lead partner for the Northumberland Uplands LEADER programme), One North East and the County Council have been working to create an initiative to address the poor access to reliable broadband in Northumberland.

Only 82% of businesses and individuals in the Uplands area have the potential to access broadband. The 2009 Rural Business Survey identified that the vast majority of rural businesses rely upon broadband but only 64% of those in the Northumberland Uplands found it was adequate for their future needs. The Household survey of Northumberland National Park shows that the figure for residents of the Park is even lower at just 28%.

Further technical analysis shows 2,300 households and business in the Northumberland Uplands are in so-called 'not-spots' where the distance from the nearest telephone exchange is so far that broadband is ineffective.

One North East have allocated £300,000 to address the problems of rural broadband in the North East via the EU funded LEADER approach. The strength of the case made by the Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group has ensured that £250,000 of these funds will come to Northumberland and be supplemented by £37,000 of further RDPE funds for business training in website / internet technologies.

Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group and One North East have appointed broadband specialists Greysky Consulting to complete the project proposal and manage the broadband project once private sector broadband providers are chosen to deliver the key outcomes of:

1. Enabling connection of 1,800 (80%) of the businesses and households to reliable broadband (2Mbps);
2. Aiming to provide at least one high speed exemplar in one of the key rural market towns.

3. Trying to extend the public sector infrastructure to businesses and households whilst avoiding legal issues of state aid;
4. Creating two high profile tourism specific Wi-Fi enabled areas around the Alwinton and Falstone settlements;
5. Delivering bespoke solutions for some of the remote businesses on the large land estates; and
6. Synchronising the roll-out with training for rural businesses in better use of web and other broadband enabled technologies.

About 1,000 rural businesses should ultimately benefit. The Northumberland Uplands Broadband offers the potential for a significant rural exemplar in matching top-down and bottom-up working to the benefit of rural business and communities.

Training in the use of the internet will be provided for small and micro businesses in the area. This is seen as an important element in stimulating demand. A programme of one-day workshops will be rolled out as services are delivered. These workshops will be delivered by GreySky Consulting and are separate from the infrastructure project.

This is a first phase project aiming to address some of the more straightforward issues. Further investment will be needed to address the very hard to reach properties and to enable next generation, super-fast, broadband to be supplied to the business and communities in key rural market towns of Haltwhistle, Bellingham, Rothbury and Wooler. In addition, early learning lessons from the more community based wi-fi and broadband solutions tested in this project will need to be further developed and rolled-out where appropriate.

Piggy-backing on Council Infrastructure

Northumberland County Council is aiming to create an arm's length operation that will allow households and businesses to use its IT infrastructure to access the internet while keeping both council and user data separate and secure.

This will make best use of the investment by the council in its IT infrastructure and will allow customers to have a contract with an Internet Service Provider which does not require Northumberland County Council involvement in data handling or billing to the customer.



New Funding for Community Buildings

£75m is available through Reaching Communities specifically for community buildings. From now until March 2013 groups can apply for grants of between £100,000 and £500,000 to extend, refurbish or replace community buildings where a wide range of community activities take place.

In addition to the usual Big Lottery criteria this funding will only be available in deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) based on the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

The IMD takes into account income, crime, employment, health, disability, education, skills and training, housing and the living environment.

The eligibility has been weighted as follows to ensure a fair spread of projects across both urban and rural areas.

- The most deprived 50% of LSOAs that are categorised as rural (villages, hamlets & isolated dwellings) are eligible to apply.
- The most deprived 20% of LSOAs categorised as rural (town and fringe) are eligible to apply
- The most deprived 15% of LSOAs categorised as urban are eligible to apply

In addition to this eligibility criteria LSOAs that received funding through the previous Community Buildings fund will not be eligible to apply this time.



There is an eligibility check on the Big Lottery website which uses the postcode of the community building to determine eligibility.

Go to www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_reaching_communities for more information.

For smaller capital projects groups can apply to the main strand of Reaching Communities for up to £50,000 for a project costing no more than £200,000.

CAN are keen to support village halls and other community buildings in developing proposals and applications to take advantage of this funding opportunity.

Ellington's New Village Hall and Community Access Library



Ellington Village Hall

Three years ago Northumberland County Council made the decision to close our library in Ellington. The Parish council held a public meeting and from this, a committee was formed to save the building which is 173 years old and is a focal point of the village. After talks with County Library it was decided that volunteers would be trained to run the building as a Village Hall and continue the library service.

The committee obtained a 25 year lease on the building. The aforesaid was in a very poor state of repair. The committee started a fund raising campaign we were awarded £52,000 from LEADER and £32,000 from County Council. It was decided that we

would use local trades' people to undertake the refurbishment work and tenders were put out to that effect. A pro bono solicitor from Dickinson Dees helped us with legal issues. In May 2010, we started the refurbishment.

Additional funding was needed to furnish the building. This was obtained from Stobswood Regeneration Fund, Potland Burn Community Fund, Sherburn Hospital Trust, Grassroots (Rio Tinto – The Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland) The Mineworkers Union and the Catherine Cookson Fund. Councillor Milburn Douglas also added a contribution to our fund.

After cutting through miles of red tape we held our grand opening on Saturday 23rd October which was well attended by the local community and was a great success.

The Village hall is now up and running with the help of excellent volunteers, who are working in the library and the community hall. We have had a new kitchen installed as part of the improvements and this gives us the opportunity to provide refreshments to both our village hall and library users.

We are confident that that the community will make full use of our attractive 'new' facility for a huge variety of functions and events.

We would like to thank not only our funders, but the assistance we have had from staff from Community Action Northumberland, Cllr Milburn Douglas and Ellington Parish Council.

Ellington Village Hall Committee

Pictured are Treasurer, Vivienne Scott (left), Councillor Milburn Douglas and Chairman, Kath Robson (right) at the opening event in October.

20,000 Voices



20,000 voices - Gospel Choir Queen's Hall

20,000 Voices is a charitable company based at Newbiggin Community Arts Centre. Originally a 3 year project set up by the Mid-NAG, it became independent in 1997 and has provided opportunities for over 133,000 Voices.

We promote, support and develop singing across Northumberland and the north east and work in partnership with a range of organisations, providing singing opportunities for any age or ability in a range of styles. We are currently running 4 Silver singing groups in Northumberland, providing weekly day-time singing for about 115 singers and hope to develop more daytime singing in the future, having already helped to set up 13 independent and thriving community choirs.

Additionally we run education projects for young children and families to promote learning, involvement, language development and a huge sense of achievement for young children.

We can also support singing in the workplace. Singing is a great team-

building activity. People who sing together are motivated, energised and have a strong sense of well-being. Just the right mindset for getting the job done!

This spring we will be running some exciting projects for adults. Michael Harper will deliver workshops on 12 and 13 February. Day 1 is a vocal development day for any singer who wishes to improve their singing, and Day 2 is a Gospel Singing Day.

Michael is an inspiring vocal leader and a internationally known professional singer. On 19 March we have a Mama Mia Day – learn songs in harmony, and try out simple steps with Fiona Clarke and Rebecca Seymour. On 14 and 15 May Paul Spicer will work with regional chamber choirs and individual singers who enjoy classical unaccompanied singing. Information about all these projects can be found on our website: www.20000voices.org

If you love or want to get involved in singing please get in touch:
Tel: 01670 852445
info@20000voices.org
www.20000voices.org

Northumberland Community Assistance Plan – Rest Centre facilities

Northumberland County Council is reviewing its designated premises for use as Rest Centres in the event of emergencies. Rest Centres are facilities where people evacuated from their homes can be moved for safety and shelter. They would normally only be used for a maximum of 48 hours

Rest Centres could be established for anything from severe weather, including flooding or even a possible aircraft crash and it is not always possible to move people to designated sites in main towns.

We are looking to include as many options as possible to cater for all possibilities and minimise disruption. We would like you to complete a form detailing some basic information on your premises – once you've had a look, return it either electronically or pop it in an envelope and submit through any Council Enquiry Office / Library. Once we've received your submission we will contact you to arrange a visit to the premises before adding the details to our database.

Please be assured any information regarding names, addresses and telephone numbers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be used for any other purpose or passed on to any other Council Department or external Agency.

There is no fee or grant attached to being included in the database although we will cover your appropriate costs for heat, light and reasonable hire charges if used.

Should you wish to discuss this request prior to completing the form do please contact me and I will be happy to respond.

N. L. Fisher
Civil Contingencies Officer
Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service
West Hartford Community Fire Station,
West Hartford Business Park
Cramlington
Northumberland
NE23 3JP

Tel: 01670 591208
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A passion for the countryside



Hunter Adair

Hunter Adair, who lives and farms in Hexham, has a real passion for the countryside and opening that countryside to children from towns and inner cities.

For thirty years, Hunter worked for the Milk Marketing Board as the regional officer for the north of England, making visits from York to the Scottish Border. Later he was asked by the Ministry of Agriculture to help children from towns and inner cities in the north of England to learn about countryside issues. For several years, he spent three days a month taking parties of primary school

children with their teachers to visit farms and dairies. He soon discovered that they knew little about rural matters and so the Guide to the Countryside was conceived. The Guide to the Countryside is a series of eight books with titles such as “How to build a stone wall”, “Wild animals and birds”, “Farm animals and farming” and “People who live and work in the countryside”. He illustrated the books with his own photographs, small ink drawings and paintings. To make sure that the information reached as many children as possible, he had the books printed and donated sets to hundreds of primary schools in the north of England and in Scotland.



Hunter’s next aim was to make his books available to children across the country and he considered the costly method of reprinting them in large numbers. Now with the help from CAN and The Country Trust, a charity which achieves its aims by organizing and conducting visits for inner city children and their teachers to farms, estates and other rural locations, Hunter’s books are now available on the

Country Trust’s website and can reach an even wider audience.

Hunter said, “I would like to thank the Community Action staff at Hexham for the help and advice they have given me”.

To see the books and paintings, go to www.countrytrust.org.uk and click on “resources”.



Invite to feature on leading third sector website

A leading website promoting learning & skills opportunities in the third sector is seeking individuals to feature as inspirational case studies.

The award winning website voluntaryskills.com already hosts several case studies of individuals working in the North of England third sector, who talk about their current role and how training has helped them along the way. The aim of this information is to stimulate an interest amongst

individuals to develop their skills or consider a career in the third sector.

voluntaryskills.com needs to update these case studies so the relevance of their content is maintained. So don’t be shy and have a quick look if you are unsure of what they are looking for – www.voluntaryskills.com/realpeople

Shaun Nichols of voluntaryskills.com says, “This is a terrific opportunity for someone to

make a contribution to our website, as well as being free publicity for themselves and their organisation in 2011.”

They would be delighted to see if you, or anyone you know, would be willing to share your work and learning experiences with others, inspiring more likeminded individuals to achieve their goals. Interested parties should contact Jake on 0191 261 6009 or email jake.saunders@voluntaryskills.com



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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 to the left. 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.

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.

How to contact us

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Copy deadline for the next issue is Friday 4 March 2011

For more information on Community Action check out the website at: www.ca-north.org.uk