

Community Action Northumberland NEWS

AUTUMN ISSUE - October 2010

CAN - supporting voluntary action and communities throughout Northumberland

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Facing a new future

With the County Council, NHS, the National Park and other public bodies facing significant and immediate financial cutbacks, the outlook for life in Northumberland is far from rosy. However, it opens fresh challenges and opportunities for local (ie parish and town councils), as David Francis reports...

Every day seems to bring further worrying news of the Coalition Government's radical plans to reduce public spending and to reorganise valued and valuable public programmes and initiatives. In Northumberland, the pressures for cutting jobs and services are exacerbated by the aftermath of LGR (local government reorganisation) which is demanding further costly restructuring and redundancies. Local (ie parish and town) councils and other community groups are finding it difficult to keep abreast of the changes and to know how best to respond.

In February, the County Council set a budget for the current year which involved over £16million savings, on a core budget of under £290m, which itself had already seen reductions of £29.8m from the previous year. In June, the Government announced a range of further cuts which would take immediate effect, and which would require councils – including Northumberland – to reduce their budgets. Locally, a further £6.9m of revenue cuts would be required, as a result of reductions or removal of specific grant funding which took effect retrospectively from the beginning of April. Further cuts will almost certainly be required, as a result of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, and the current estimate for Northumberland will be a further £30m per annum set of reductions.

The reorganisation of seven authorities to create the new unitary authority was based on a vision of improvements, better ways of working, better services, and a better working relationship between local government and its community. This has now been eclipsed by the dire economic situation, and a fundamental re-think is needed on how services are organised: by whom, how, and with what resources. Whether we like it or not, parish and town councils and voluntary bodies will need to take the initiative to make some things happen, or else they will be lost or otherwise not happen at all.

Despite Government threats to cap their budgets (which would be highly problematic), local councils will need to

be prepared to take direct responsibility for service-delivery, and to support initiatives and services provided by other bodies, and this will require material increases in their precepts from next year (April 2011) onwards. The prospect of local councils having to 'pick up the tab' for NCC cuts will be unpalatable, but probably unavoidable.

The dire financial situation is also causing a re-think in arrangements for partnership working and community engagement in Northumberland, not least because the costs for the County Council of staffing and servicing an elaborate structure of groups and meetings are increasingly unaffordable. It seems likely that the Northumberland Strategic Partnership's area and thematic sub-structure will shrink or disappear, and locality-level community forums may lose some or all of their support – financial and staffing.

This may be unfortunate, but it will also open the door to a more-spontaneous and organic emergence of new networking and partnership opportunities, where local councils, groups and agencies want to make them happen.

In turn, this will provide new challenges to parish and town councils to prove themselves as the true hub of the community: empowering local people, acting openly and responsively, and facilitating local initiatives and activities.

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It's All Happening Way Out West ...



Alongside the West Northumberland Community Development Network's key aim of providing support for community development workers in the district, one of its fundamental objectives is to share experiences and promote good practice and joint working.

The Network is hosted, facilitated and serviced by the CAN team in the west, and Maureen Murray, (Community Development Worker at the Sure Start Children's Centre in Hexham which is part of the Early Years and Schools Service – and a member of the Network) – used its information dissemination service to promote the work of Sure Start across the Network through a special WILD WEST DADS event.

This event had been the subject of much careful forethought and planning by all five Children's Centres in west Northumberland. Not only was it the intention to get more people in the area more aware of the diverse work that Sure Start undertakes in providing a range of services for families with children under 5 - but Maureen and her colleagues especially wanted to raise the profile of the work it does with DADS!

Maureen was also keen to use the event as an opportunity to encourage local community groups to get involved – not only to enhance the chances of a

successful event but also to showcase local vcs partnership working.

And what a success it was !! Over 700 people attended the event – celebrating Dads and their children - on the Sele Park in Hexham Abbey grounds on August 14th. Live music, games, bouncy castles and slide, shuggy boats, balloon modelling, sports, crafts and face painting were all top of the enjoyment list as part of a wide variety of activities which several local organisations offered for free of charge.

A photographic exhibition of Hexham Children's Centre's 'SaturDads' and their children was put on display in the foyer of Queen's Hall in Hexham after the event.

Maureen was thrilled with the success of the event and very appreciative of the enabling role that the Network played in getting the message out to over 70 Network members and in offering the opportunity to get so many different groups involved.

More information about the work of the 5 Children's Centres in west Northumberland – at Hexham, Haltwhistle, Prudhoe, Ponteland and Bellingham – can be found at <http://www.westchildrenscentres.org.uk/default.asp>

New trustees join CAN

At our September meeting, we were pleased to welcome three new trustees to our Executive Committee. Joining us from the local councils' sector is NALC President Jim Rudd. Jim has supported our work for a long time, and is a frequent visitor to our offices in Morpeth. He has a particular interest in health and social welfare issues.

We have also been joined by two County Councillors. Anthony Murray represents the Wooler area on NCC and sits on the National Park Authority; he is well-known to local communities in the Glendale area; and is a long-serving member of the Glendale Gateway Trust. Ian Lindley represents the Morpeth Stobhill division and is actively involved in a range of local initiatives; he is the portfolio holder for neighbourhood services on the NCC Executive, and has a special interest in the fire and rescue services.



Anthony Murray



Ian Lindley



Jim Rudd

Local councils and their communities

Parish and town councils exist to serve, represent and to develop their communities. This means that they fulfil four key roles:

- (i) As a local parliament, being a focal point for identifying issues, open to new ideas, gathering facts and opinions, addressing conflicts/ opposing points of view, reaching conclusions and making decisions
- (ii) As a voice for the community, making views known to a variety of responsible bodies whose decisions, programmes and activities have a bearing on life in the community.
- (iii) As an organiser of activities and provider of services, meeting a variety of needs and aspirations through events, amenities, services and so on.
- (iv) As a supporter and facilitator of action by the wider community, by providing finance, support, premises, encouragement or whatever else is needed to enable community groups, volunteers and local businesses to flourish.

Local councils have been fulfilling these roles for a long time, with varying degrees of emphasis and success. However, arguably there are now greater pressures on local councils due both to the expectations of local residents and to the reducing 'reach' of central government and principal authorities. Many local councils now facilitate, and operate within the framework of a community-led plan. This enables councils and their communities to think and plan ahead, as well as encouraging "buy-in" and action by the wider community.

Advice and support for local councils 'community-engagement and planning' activities are available from Jane Hart, Melanie Hall, Marc Johnson and Christine Nicholls (contact details on back page)

'Rain Tax' update



The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 contains a clause allowing a water and sewerage company to choose to operate concessionary schemes for community groups for 'surface water drainage charges'. For the clause to take effect a further piece of legislation, known as a Statutory Instrument, has to be issued and more detailed guidance needs to be issued from Government. A water and sewerage company must take this guidance into account when determining their position on concessions.

Following publication of the final guidance, later this year, Northumbrian Water will have to determine whether to make a concession and which classes of community groups to include. If they choose to introduce a concessionary scheme they are required to consult with their customers and their representatives. This consultation must include groups and organisations which would not benefit from a concession as well as those groups that potentially would benefit. To ensure that the full range of customer views are heard, Northumbrian Water are also required to consult with the Consumer Council for Water, which represent water and sewerage customers as a whole.

This is a lengthy process which can not be concluded until the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) approves any concessionary scheme as part of Northumbrian Water's Charges Scheme.

As the Ministerial guidance has not yet been issued, it is too early to say whether a scheme will be introduced or give any indication of timescales. Northumbrian Water has agreed to provide us with regular updates.

If you would like more information and an opportunity to respond to the Government's consultation on concessionary schemes, please visit the Defra web site www.defra.gov.uk.

The closing date for written responses is 22 October 2010. Responses should be sent to the following email address: swdconcessions.consultations@defra.gsi.gov.uk

or by post to:

Consultation on SWD concessions
Water Charging and
Economic Regulation Team
Defra
Area 2C Ergon House
Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AL

AGM time

- NALC's AGM takes place on Saturday 23 October at 10am in Storey Park Community Centre, St Mary's Field, Morpeth NE61 2QE.

- All parish and town councils are welcome to send representatives. As well as the formal AGM business, David Francis will be giving a presentation on the current issues and challenges facing the local councils' sector in our area.

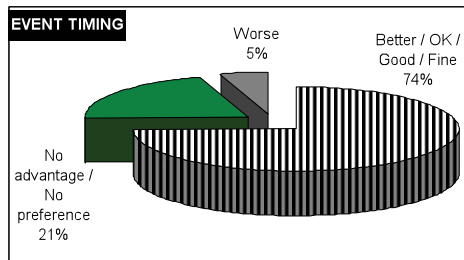
- CAN's AGM will take place on Wednesday 3 November at Stannington Village Hall, Stannington, Morpeth, NE61 6EL from 2pm. Further details will be circulated shortly.



Meet The Funders – 2010

This year CAN organised another series of its very successful and popular **MEET THE FUNDERS** events for voluntary and community groups across the county. In May and June, Morpeth Town Hall, Bellingham Town Hall and Berwick Rugby Club played host to 107 groups (125 people) who came to get valuable one-to-one advice from a range of funders including

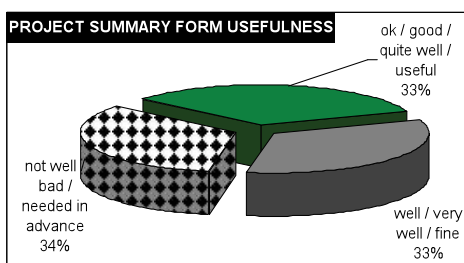
BBC Children In Need; Big Lottery; Community Foundation; Co-operative group; Greggs; Joicey Trust; NCC Community Chest; Northumberland National Park; Northumberland Lowlands and Coast Leader; Northumberland Uplands Leader; Northern Rock; Northumberland Coast AONB; Sir James Knott and Unity Trust Bank



Following on from the success of the previous year - all the events were held in the late afternoon/early evening rather than the daytime. The vast majority of groups (74%) felt that this timing made the events more accessible as it allowed many people to attend the event whilst on their way home from work.

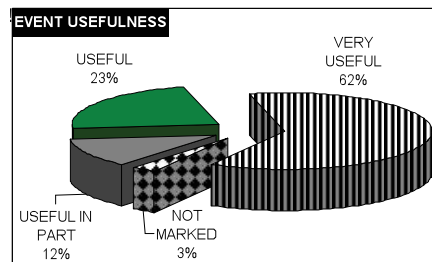
The Project Summary forms, which we introduced after the event at Stannington last year, still have groups split on their usefulness and effectiveness.

However, the forms proved more popular than last year and 33% felt that they worked very well indeed; 33% indicated that they were quite good or worked reasonably well, whilst 34% either didn't use them at all or felt that they were not useful. Several also commented that they



felt that the forms should be supplied to groups in advance of the event so that they could be filled in prior to arrival. The idea behind the forms – on which groups write their details of their organisation and project details/costs and then hand the form to each funder they meet - is to reduce queuing; to help to cut down on the amount of time that groups spent in dialogue with each funder; to avoid needless repetition; and to give more time for funders to give advice and information directly relevant to the project concerned,.

The majority of the funders, however, (83%) found the system to be very useful and one funder even indicated that she was going to recommend it to organisers of other similar events!



An additional attempt to try to reduce queuing/waiting times which we trialled during the 2009 events – a 'block-booking' system – was used for this year's events. Although the Bellingham event was overcrowded, the system of having a booked arrival time during a selected half-hour period worked very well.

Once again, the opportunity to discuss their projects in detail and face-to-face with a wide range of prospective funders, in one place, was greatly appreciated by the groups. This is reflected in the fact that 85% of those attending found the events to be either useful or very useful. The only disappointing part of this year's events was the low turnout in the very, very north of 'our patch'. We decided to hold an event at Berwick to cater for the growing number of groups in the area and to give them an opportunity to meet funders 'on their doorstep' instead of having to travel to Alnwick each year. The British summer, however, had other ideas and decided to put on a display of incredible warmth and glorious sunshine – which obviously was more of an attraction to the folk of Berwick on the night!!

The BOSS Project – Rural North East Back Office Services Support for Community Groups

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

Do you need someone to help with printing, copying, mailing, choosing a computer or fixing one, website design, recruitment, payroll or accounts?

The BOSS Project is here to help!

Go to www.teesvalleyrcc.org.uk and click on the blue BOSS PROJECT link at the bottom of the Menu on the left-hand side of the home page. This gives you access to a directory of service providers and training workshops for committee members on:

- Hallmark Quality Standards
- Looking after money
- 'One click' easy accounts
- Web presence and website design
- Better ways to manage the group.

Community Action Northumberland is currently in the process of organising training courses on the first three projects as shown above. More details in due course, but in the meantime, village hall trustees may be interested in a presentation by Peter Bryan about financial management for village halls, called 'Looking after the money', which also includes a presentation of the very simple accounts package he has developed. The presentations will be given at the North Northumberland Village Hall Consortium meeting on Friday 8 October from 7pm in Beadnell WI Hall and the West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium meeting on Wednesday 20 October in Stocksfield Institute from 7pm. Trustees (particularly treasurers) are encouraged to attend either meeting – consortium membership is not necessary – you will be made very welcome.

The BOSS Project is managed by Tees Valley RCC in partnership with Durham RCC and Community Action Northumberland, and is funded by The Big Lottery.





The Local Environmental Action Fund

The Local Environmental Action Fund supports projects that address environmental issues through actions at a local level.

We encourage applications from projects that are able to demonstrate the following outcomes:

- Encouraging communities to get involved in environmental activities
- Changing behaviours leading to more local environmental action
- Having a positive impact on the environment
- Sharing learning about the environment with others

Projects should have social and community benefits along with environmental outcomes. While the fund will consider projects focused on any environmental issue, the LEAF Committee are particularly keen in 2010, to receive projects focused on the following key issues:

- Biodiversity & habitat preservation
- Litter/ rubbish reduction
- Carbon capture and climate change adaptation
- Marine and coastal projects
- Flooding mitigation and adaptation
- Waste and reducing landfill
- Feasibility studies for environmental projects
- Creating/ developing green spaces

Grants of between £1,000 and £20,000 are available to voluntary and community organisations for revenue and/or capital projects. Occasionally grants may be made over more than one year. The grants are available for projects in Tyne & Wear and Northumberland.

The fund meets quarterly each year in March, June, September and December. Deadlines for applications are the 1st of the month before the fund meeting. Applicants are advised if successful within 1 month of these meetings.

You can apply online or download an application form from at the Community Foundation website: www.communityfoundation.org.uk

Please note: As the fund aims to inspire wider local action on environmental issues it is very important that the learning from successful applicants is collected and shared with others. Applicants must therefore demonstrate in their application how they plan to raise awareness of wider environmental issues, and the difference the project will make to environmental issues. Successful applicants will then be asked to provide feedback that demonstrates how they have achieved this over the course of the project.

To discuss a project idea in more detail before you apply or if you have any other queries, contact Katie Wellstead at the Community Foundation – tel. 0191 2220945, email kw@communityfoundation.org.uk

We are unlikely to support:

- Conservation of charismatic well supported species or non-native species
- Enhancement of habitat for sporting purposes
- Expeditions or fieldwork outside of the UK
- Playground or school ground improvements (unless there is significant wider community use)
- Support for individuals
- Zoos, captive breeding and animal rescue centres
- Beautification competitions (eg Villages in Bloom)
- Generic annual festivals

Background to the fund:

The Local Environmental Action Fund is a partnership of funders which currently includes the Greggs Foundation, the Community Foundation, the Shears Foundation and a private donor. The Sir James Knott Trust is also a founding member of the fund.

The fund provides an opportunity for the partners involved to work together to support environmental projects and share learning with grant makers and voluntary and community groups. This approach provides a focussed environmental grant making programme for voluntary and community groups in Tyne & Wear and Northumberland.

Since its launch in Autumn 2006, the Local Environmental Action Fund has awarded 75 grants totalling over £690,000 to voluntary and community organisations.



Seed project

Social enterprises back in demand for Future Jobs Fund style placements



Muz at Viewpoint

Social enterprises are set to be back in demand to support the long term unemployed following George Osborne's announcement to scrap the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) scheme.

The Social Enterprise and Employment Development (SEED) Project is an Action for Blind People initiative set up to match blind and partially sighted people to social enterprises for paid placements throughout the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands.

The SEED project, with £0.5 million of funding from the Big Lottery, provides six-month paid trainee placements and shorter term unpaid work placements to visually impaired people within social enterprises. Trainees and enterprises will be supported throughout the placements by the SEED team, with the loan of any adaptive equipment,

support in creating development plans and increasing employability skills.

Alistair Ponton, Managing Director of Viewpoint CIC, a Yorkshire based social enterprise, said: "The trainees we have had through the SEED Project have been enormously beneficial to Viewpoint. Their customer service and IT skills have pushed the boundaries of what services our business can offer and their attitude to helping Viewpoint succeed has reinvigorated our entire staff team."

For more information please call the team on 0113 386 2800, email seed@actionforblindpeople.org.uk or visit www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/seed-project.html

Free database for small charities and community groups

Lasa is a leading national charity providing services in welfare rights advice, information and training, ICT advice and consultancy.

It is offering an **Advice and Information Management System database (AIMS Free)** to all small community groups and third sector organisations across the UK to help them deliver their services more efficiently and cost effectively in challenging times.

The AIMS entry level package is completely **FREE** of charge, and contains everything groups may need to start capturing details of clients, work undertaken and outcomes achieved.

AIMS Core Application - is available in FREE (see below) and pay-for versions and has the following features:

- Client and Organisational contact details
- Individuals' and Organisations' user information and client profiling data
- Contact and problem counts, including dates, duration, where and when
- Work Done information including quantity and notes, referral etc
- Letter and form generation to assist with case management (Client mail merge)
- Outcome monitoring, including financial outcomes
- Suite of standard and ad-hoc reports

The **FREE** version of the AIMS database – available in **Microsoft Access only** - provides all the functionality listed above but is limited to a **maximum of 5 users**. Upgrades to any of the other packages can be made at any time. The AIMS Free

package does not come with any support but you can purchase this separately via the website.

CAN has not had an opportunity to test out the suitability of this database for VCS groups but in order **to assess whether AIMS is right for you** – the website offers a free download Demo in two different versions and is designed to run on stand alone computers running Windows 2000, XP or Vista.

You can download these from:-<http://www.lasa.org.uk/aims/download/>
To find out more visit: www.lasa.org.uk/aims



Highlights Community Touring Scheme

Highlights is a community touring scheme and one of 41 similar schemes around the country. We work in partnership with voluntary promoters in village halls, community centres and schools, to provide professional touring theatre, as well as dance, music, comedy, children's shows and exhibitions. Highlights is currently working with over 30 community venues across Northumberland.

Because we receive funding from Northumberland County Council and Arts Council England, we can offer shows to our promoters at a fraction of the cost making it possible for smaller, isolated villages to offer their communities access to touring productions from regional, national and international performance companies.

Highlights' new season started in September and 16 different shows will be presented in over 25 village halls and community venues across Northumberland. Selected shows offer free tickets to anyone 26yrs or under, under a national initiative 'A Night Less Ordinary'.

To give but a flavour, village audiences can see:

- Harald Hugaard Trio – Denmark's Hugaard is hailed as one of the top 3 fiddle players in the world;
- 'Birdwatching' performed by Alex Horne - the award-winning comic and star of BBC4's 'We Need Answers';
- Opera Dudes – a mix of musical pedigree and humour from a former Cambridge scholar and an ex builder turned international opera tenor;
- 'Charity Shop Cabaret' – a quirky and fantastically funny show from Cornwall by one of the writers on C4's 'Smack The Pony'

To find out more about shows at a village hall near you, look out for our brochures or visit www.highlightsnorth.co.uk or phone Esther on 07813 696.

(Back Row) John Hirst, Joe Fowler and Mike Coleman
2nd row down, Stuart Finden, Fiona Littlewood and Brian Bell
3rd row down, Heather Bell and Rick Kemp
(Front Row) Saul Rose and Simon Care



The Five Lamps Organisation in Northumberland

The Five Lamps is a charitable Organisation which now has an office in Morpeth.

Our aim is to help financially excluded people living in Northumberland, by offering them affordable low cost loans. We enjoy brilliant partnership working with a wide range of services and organisations across the County. We can offer first step financial advice and set up basic bank accounts if required. Our service is delivered by using community venues throughout the County for sign ups and where required we offer home visits. Our staff are friendly and approachable and each has a wide range of experience of working with people from a variety of backgrounds. We offer loans from as little as £50.00 up to £1,000.00. The rate we offer is very competitive and is a far cheaper option than using doorstep lenders and hire purchase suppliers. We hope to prevent people approaching loan sharks and from using high cost lenders.

Loan Examples

Typical Doorstep Lender

Amount	Per Week	Total Repaid	Cost of Loan
£300	£10.50	£546.00	£246.00

Five Lamps Loan

Amount	Per Week	Total Repaid	Cost of Loan
£300	£12.45	£320.98	£20.98

The above example is for a repayment period of 26 weeks. We can also offer loans over a 52 week period.

For further information contact the Five Lamps Organisation on Freephone 0800 4580120 or Head Office 01642 608316



Steve Redpath of Five Lamps

If any organisation requires a presentation or if groups would like further information, please contact Steven Redpath, Financial Inclusion Link Worker on: Tel 01670 513224

Walk more, feel the difference



Would you like to join a friendly group which walks on a regular basis, whether to get fitter and just get out for some fresh air and have a chat? If so, Walking for Health may be for you. There are more than 30 free, weekly walks available across Northumberland. Walking for Health is a national project which promotes the benefits of walking to all; many

people find the walks hugely enjoyable and feel better both physically and mentally better having shared the opportunity for a walk with other people. It is a great opportunity to explore your local area and to enjoy the natural environment. The walks last for about 1 hour and are led by trained volunteers. Many of the towns and villages in Northumberland have their own walk; you can find out where your nearest walk is by looking at the Walk Finder section of the Walking for Health website: www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk or by contacting Alison Carter at Natural England: alison.carter@naturalengland.org.uk or 0300 060 4514. Then all you have to do is turn up and enjoy the walk.

Are you sitting on yours?



Northumberland County Council has posted out an electoral registration form to every household in the county. By completing and returning it, residents will ensure they are on the electoral register and eligible to vote.

Although 150,000 forms have been sent out – there are still thousands still to be returned.

Posting out reminder letters to so many households will cost the council money - money that could be spent more effectively on other services.

If you have not already done so, please hunt down the form then complete it, sign it and return it to the council as soon as possible.

If your details have not changed and the form is correct, then the easiest way to register is via the telephone, on line, or for the first time this year by SMS text. Each electoral registration form has a unique security code, which allows the householder to use internet (www.ElectorRegistration.co.uk/northumberland) or freephone (08000

251 088) or Text 07797 898 788 to confirm their details have not changed.

Mick Miller, electoral services manager at Northumberland County Council said:

“At every election people lose their right to vote because they don't realise that they have to renew their registration every year. Please make sure you are not one of them by looking out for your form and replying to us promptly.”

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



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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

MAIN OFFICE:

David Francis, *Director*
George Courtice, *Sector Development Officer*
Louise Currie, *Community Initiatives Officer*
Sue Andrew, *Office Administrator*
Linda Frater, *Finance Officer*
Margaret Tweddell, *Asst. Finance Officer*
Carol Megson, *Asst. Finance Officer*
Tel: 01670 517178
Email: info@ca-north.org.uk

NORTHERN AREA

Marc Johnson (CDO Alnwick)
01665 605540
Christine Nicholls (CDO Berwick)
01289 304141

WESTERN AREA

Jane Hart (Senior CDO)
Melanie Hall (CDO West) 01434 607871

Copy deadline for the next issue is Friday 3rd December

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