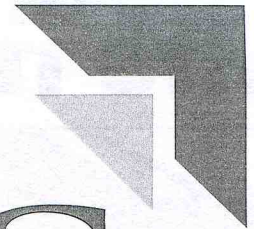


# Community Action Northumberland NEWS

APRIL to MAY 2009

CAN - supporting voluntary action and communities throughout Northumberland

PUBLISHED BY COMMUNITY ACTION NORTHUMBERLAND, TOWER BUILDINGS, 9 OLDGATE, MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND NE61 1PY. TEL. 01670 517178



## NINE NEW COUNCILS

THE FIRST OF APRIL this year was an historic moment in the life of Northumberland, with the creation of a new local government structure. This was the first major changes since 1974, when the very-local urban and rural district councils and municipal boroughs were merged, and the area of Tyneside was enlarged, to create six district councils in Northumberland.

Now the county and district councils have been merged to form a single, Northumberland-wide, unitary authority. Similar reorganisations have been taking place in Durham, Shropshire, Wiltshire, Cornwall, Bedfordshire and Cheshire, and further reviews are under way for Norfolk, Suffolk and Devon.

At the same time, the 'parish map' of Northumberland has been completed, with the creation of eight new parish councils for the towns and communities of South-East Northumberland: Ashington, Blyth, Cramlington, East Bedlington (ie Cambois and Bedlington Station), Newbiggin, North Bedlington (ie Choppington/Stakeford), Seaton Valley and West Bedlington (ie Bedlington town). These new parish councils will develop in stages. They were formed

on 1 April, with 'caretaker' arrangements in place until the 4 June elections. Their line-up of directly-elected councillors will take up office on 8 June, after which they will begin to serve and engage with their communities, as well as seeing to the logistical needs: budgeting, recruiting staff, setting up offices, and so on.

As with all parish councils, these new ones will be a 'voice', representing their local communities through a wide range of consultative and partnership arrangements. Over the next few years they will increasingly take a direct responsibility for the provision and management of local services, and they will have powers and budgets that can be used to support a wide range of community groups and activities.

Local residents and people who work within a parish can become a parish council member by

standing for election. The nomination process is very straightforward, and no particular qualifications or experience are needed; just an interest in, and commitment to, serving the local community.

Nomination papers for the parish elections in South-East Northumberland are available from:

Jackie Brodie, Elections Office, Town Hall, Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

Tel 01670 532290  
Fax 01670 520136

for parishes in the former Wansbeck

email  
Jackie.Brodie@Northumberland.Gov.uk

and for Blyth Valley Parishes

Judith Peverley, Elections Office,  
Civic Centre, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2BX

Tel 01670 542210

email  
Judith.Peverley@Northumberland.Gov.uk

In both cases appointments need to be made beforehand. Packs are available from 6th April 2009.

Information about the new parish councils is available from Sue Finch or David Francis at NALC, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1PY.

Tel: 01670 517178

## Thanks and best wishes

ON 1 APRIL the current roles of some hundreds of staff and district councillors came to an end as a result of local government reorganisation. We thank them all for their service to Northumberland's communities, in many instances spanning a number of decades.

To all of you, we wish you well in the future, whether this is in other spheres of activity, or in a well-earned retirement.

## CAN's Spring Meeting

THIS YEAR'S SPRING MEETING will take place on Wednesday 13 May at 2.30pm in Whalton Village Hall, west of Morpeth. It will be chaired by CAN's President, the Duke of Northumberland, and the guest speaker will be Steve Stewart, the new Chief Executive of the unitary authority.

CAN's Spring Meetings are open to anyone and everyone who has an interest in voluntary and community initiatives in Northumberland. There is no charge, but it is helpful if people book in advance, to help us with the catering arrangements.

Interested in joining us? Please contact the Morpeth office on 01670 517178 or email us at [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)

Thank you.

## CAN says 'Thanks'

FOR MOST voluntary organisations, forward planning is difficult when there is uncertainty over future funding, and CAN is no exception. We have therefore been grateful to receive confirmation of two key income streams. One is the Big Lottery, which is making a five-year commitment to CAN's work. The other is the new Northumberland Authority, which has confirmed a continuation for 2009-10 of the same level of funding which had previously come from the county and district councils and the NSP. These are significant contributions towards our community development work and our networking and policy-influencing work. Together with contributions from local groups and ACRE, they will go a long way towards supporting our total work package for 2009-10 and beyond.

Northumberland County Council and Big Lottery: 'Thank you'.

## THE NEW NSP

The NSP (Northumberland Strategic Partnership) is widely recognised as one of Northumberland's great successes. As a sub-regional economic partnership, it has been hugely effective in planning and managing a range of regeneration programmes: One NorthEast's SRB and Single Programme investments, EU Objective 2, DEFRA Social and Community Programme and the Market Towns' Initiative, for example. As an LSP (local strategic partnership) the NSP has achieved a high level of co-operation and joint initiatives involving the county and district councils, the NHS, voluntary/community sector, parish councils, and others. The county-wide sustainable community strategy and the LAA (local area agreement) are NSP responsibilities.

In recent months the role, resourcing and structure of NSP have been reviewed, in response to the reorganisation of local government, ONE's changed approach to programme-management, and the need to rationalise and co-ordinate the array of partnership activities within Northumberland.

Following consultation with partners – including voluntary and community bodies and parish councils – new arrangements will progressively be put in place, from April 2009.

**Role:** NSP's roles are defined as:

- promote partnership working;
- exercise a leadership role in articulating the needs and aspirations of local communities and helping to reconcile between competing interests;
- have oversight of and coordinate community consultation and engagement activities;
- coordinate the development of both a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) to establish a shared vision and a Local Area Agreement (LAA) to formalise the priorities in delivering the SCS;
- have oversight of the planning and alignment of resources in the county;
- review and performance manage progress against the LAA priorities and targets;
- champion the interests of Northumberland within regional and national settings; and
- challenge convention and advocate change where appropriate.

**Structure:** at county-wide level the NSP will be governed by a Board composed of councillors, trustees and members drawn from the boards

of public agencies. Four of these Board members will take on a role to champion certain 'cross-cutting' issues: climate change; economic and financial inclusion; rural affairs/access to services; and community cohesion. The Board will be supported by an Executive body, composed of senior staff from various public sector and VCS bodies. This executive will manage the NSP's operational matters and will monitor performance within the context of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. To focus on key topic-areas, there will be 4 county-wide Thematic partnerships, concerned with: economic prosperity; place-shaping; health, care and well-being; and stronger communities.

To address the diversity of different parts of the county there will be 3 Area Partnerships: for the North, the South-East and the West.

The review has also recognised the importance of a strong tie-in with 2 statutorily-prescribed Affiliated partnerships: the FACT (Family and Children's Trust); and the Safer Northumberland Partnership (concerned with crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse).

Provision is made within these various structures for representation of the voluntary and community sectors and parish councils, among other interests. The VCS Consortium and NALC (the Northumberland Association of Local Councils) will have key roles in facilitating this engagement.

### Staffing

Instead of a free-standing NSP staff team, the NSP's county-wide structure will be supported by members of the new Authority's Policy Team, (headed by Janice Rose) and the Area Partnerships will be supported by the Locality Team (headed by Ailsa Coverdale). Any ONE-related programme management will be supported by the Authority's Regeneration Team (headed by Andy Dean).

Implementation of the new arrangements will involve among other things, the selection and appointment of new representatives to the partnership structures, the development of a communications and engagement strategy, and the development of active networks of VCS bodies and of parish councils at an Area level, in order to engage with the new partnership arrangements.

### People

At the final board meeting of the 'old' NSP in March, partners paid tribute to the massive contribution made by its first two leading officers, Alan Wann and John Litherland, and to the Board's outgoing Chairman, Bob Langley. The membership and chairmanship of the new structure will become clear over the coming months.

# ANOTHER ONE HITS THE MARK!



Eddie Stafford (L) & Alan Hodgson (R)

CONGRATULATIONS to South Charlton Village Hall, which is the latest to be awarded Hallmark 1.

Hallmark is a National Accredited scheme for the management of village halls and other community buildings and is managed and run by Community Action Northumberland. The Visitors (assessors) are all volunteers who are or have been trustees of a community/village hall – so they are very skilled. This group of twelve Visitors give their time freely, to assist CAN in delivering this scheme.

There are three awards, the first, Hallmark 1, is based on day-to-day management, the way meetings and the AGM are conducted, committee procedures, accounts, insurance and working in accordance with the governing document. Other issues are also covered, such as hiring procedures and the physical condition of the building.

South Charlton Village Hall was originally the village school, and is now a thriving, busy facility and it is clear that it is being very well used, with work of the young members of the village “The Little Acorns” being prominently displayed on the walls, highlighting its warm and friendly atmosphere. There are many other activities based in the hall and the committee is clearly a group of dedicated residents. The two Visitors ‘assessed’ the hall in March, and had no hesitation in awarding the certificate.

The Visitors on this occasion were Clive Hallam-Baker and Edward Brown and they were made very welcome by Alan Hodgson and Eddie Stafford, on the day of the Visit.

The hall is a member of the North Northumberland Village Hall Consortium. (Please see the article about the consortium on page 3 of this edition.)

## AN EYE-OPENER! Reader Survey results

A BIG THANK YOU to all who responded and for your enlightening comments. Constructive criticism as well as encouragement is always welcomed.

Our proposal to change the format of CAN News and to use larger text, met with a strong, positive response. So this will be the last of the old style CAN News! The new format will be A4 portrait and will have articles produced in a larger text for ease of reading.

67% of responders preferred bi-monthly publications so this will continue, while 93% of responses indicated that they find the newsletter useful, interesting and relevant to their organisation. As expected, funding and new legislation, together with specific information for parish councils, community groups and community buildings were shown to be the more important topics for our readers but there was still interest in general information. We take pains to ensure that anything which is ‘dated’ is published in good time so, in order to cater for and highlight, more time-related events, our printed CAN News will be supplemented by a monthly electronic bulletin which will be displayed on the Home Page of our website [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)

Many of you also indicated that you would be willing to send us an article in the future. Don’t wait to be invited – if you have some news, let us know and we’ll do our best to have it included in the next issue! We are intending to lighten the text overall, by including more photographs, so if you DO send us an article for inclusion, please try to also send a photo to go with it.

ISSUE	DEADLINE
June to July - issue 2903	Friday 22 May
August to September - issue 2904	Friday 24 July
October to November - issue 2905	Friday 25 September
December to January - issue 2906	Friday 20 November

As a post script, we aren’t always told when our mailouts are surplus to requirements, or when they aren’t being sent to the correct address. Don’t forget – if your contact details change, if you have any ideas on how we could improve our distribution, or indeed if you want to be taken off our mailing list, please do get in touch with Sue Andrew on 01670 517178 or 500820, or email [sueandrew@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:sueandrew@ca-north.org.uk) We’ll be happy to hear from you.

## AWARDS FOR ALL BRIEFINGS

‘FROM THE 1 APRIL 2009 the Awards for All programme changed. In the past the programme has delivered funding on behalf of Arts Council England, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Sport England. The changes will mean that each of these lottery distributors now run their own programmes, instead of contributing to Awards for All. The new Awards for All programme will deliver funding from the Big Lottery Fund only.

CAN arranged three events at the beginning of March in Hexham, Berwick and Stanington, to brief organisations and groups about the changes. Staff from the Big Lottery Fund Regional Team gave presentations to a total of 59 people in the three venues. Feedback about the sessions has been most positive, stating that it makes a big difference to meet the funders face-to-face.

If you were unable to make any of the sessions, but would like further information, please call the Awards for All Advice Line - 0845 600 2040

Thank you very much to everyone who attended.

# BE A BRIGHT SPARK!

THE ISSUE about electrical testing is raised quite frequently by the management committees of community buildings and village halls in their quest to ensure the safety of their users. It has become even more important, as more halls are entering the Hallmark Scheme, because evidence of safe and good practice in a range of matters, forms part of the assessment for this accredited award. In addition, the two Consortia (West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium and North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium) are continually striving to give member halls advice and guidance on a range of matters – including electrical safety, which has been raised in recent Consortium meetings.

The following information, therefore, is intended to be a guideline only, as there is no clear, ‘hard and fast rule’. There are too many anomalies which must be given due consideration.

Full inspection tests carried out by an electrician should be undertaken every 3-5 years. However, a ‘competent person’ should carry out visual walk around inspections on a regular basis or as is felt necessary for the particular hall. If it is felt that equipment in the building can be unplugged and taken away and needs checking every year, then PATesting can be carried out annually. It is our understanding, that annual PATesting is not a legal requirement – but would be classed as ‘good practice’. Therefore, by undertaking it annually, you would be certainly fulfilling the requirement.

There may be specific conditions on a Premises Licence or perhaps in an Insurance

Policy, which require a committee to undertake more frequent inspections - these may be geared to a particular hall/building. Electrical systems such as heating may also have manufacturer’s recommendations for inspection intervals. It would be advisable therefore that the detail of licences and particular systems is carefully scrutinised. Electrical safety issues will be different from hall to hall - just as with fire risk assessments.

The level of inspection and testing required is dependant upon the risk of the appliance becoming faulty, which is in turn dependant upon the type of appliance, the nature of its use and the environment in which it is used.

The Electricity at Work Regulations place a legal responsibility on employers, employees and self-employed persons to comply with the provisions of the regulations and take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that no danger results from the use of such equipment. This in effect requires the implementation of a systematic and regular programme of maintenance, inspection and testing. The Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) places such an obligation in the following circumstances:

- 1. Where appliances are used by employees.
- 2. Where the public may use appliances in establishments such as hospitals, schools, hotels, shops, community halls etc.
- 3. Where appliances are supplied or hired.
- 4. Where appliances are repaired or serviced.

Equipment that is stored on the premises and used regularly by groups should be tested in the same way as other equipment, such as the kettles. Agreement should be reached with the groups that own this equipment - perhaps as part of the hiring agreement? In the same way, groups bringing in their own equipment for use, have responsibility for ensuring it is safe. This again, could be dealt with through the hiring agreement.

The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) is a very useful source of information.

