

Community Action Northumberland NEWS



JUNE 2009 - JULY 2009

CAN - supporting voluntary action and communities throughout Northumberland

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CAN Spring Meeting

A packed meeting of CAN's members, friends and partners met at Whalton Village Hall on 13 May to hear about progress with the new Northumberland local authority, which came into being on 1 April. In the absence of Chief Executive Steve Stewart, Executive Director Jill Dixon stepped in at short notice to give the presentation.

The transition to the new Authority from the previous 7 councils was now largely complete and had happened with almost no hitches. Work was now progressing on staff inductions and developing the medium-term policies and plans, and particular priority would be given to a range of issues including economic recovery, service-integration, climate change, efficiency improvement and building stronger and more-resilient communities.



Enjoying the sunshine after the Spring Meeting are: David Francis, Jill Dixon and George Scott

CONTENTS

CAN SPRING MEETING	1
CAN'S NEW BABY	1
SLCC TRAINING DAY	2
HALLMARK	2
LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM FOR LOCAL GROUPS	3
ON THE BUSES	4
WOODLAND BURIALS	4
FACING UP TO FLOODING	5
PARISH COUNCIL TRAINING	5
MEET THE FUNDERS	5
ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE EVENT	6
A RAIN TAX?	6
SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE USERS OF COMMUNITY BUILDINGS	6
REMEMBER WHEN?	6
NEW HOSPITAL FACILITIES - CONSULTATION	7
NORTH N'LAND VILLAGE HALLS NEWSLETTER	7
WEST N'LAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM	7
BECOME A DIGITAL CHAMPION	7
LICENSING CHANGES	8

The new Authority was committed to ensuring that there is a strong and well-organised voluntary and community sector and effective parish councils.

There followed a lively question-and-answer session, covering a very wide range of topics, such as planning

committee meetings, NEATS (Neighbourhood Environmental Actions Teams), county division boundaries, the powers of community forums, car parking and financial investments.

CAN Executive Committee member Sue Ashmore led the vote of thanks.

CAN's new baby

The staff at CAN send a big 'Welcome' to Joshua Edward Johnson, the new son of Caroline and Marc Johnson, who arrived on Friday 1 May, weighing in at 6lb 2oz. Congratulations to all the family.

Hallmark 1 achievement



Pictured are members of the management committee outside the building.

Congratulations are in order for Newton & Bywell Community Hall which was awarded Hallmark 1 in April.

Hallmark is the optional National Accredited Scheme for the management of village halls/ community buildings and is managed and run by Community Action Northumberland. Newton and Bywell Community Hall is the fourth hall to enter and pass the scheme. A fifth hall has just sent in its application and will be assessed in the next few weeks.

Newton and Bywell Hall is an attractive single storey stone built building and is less than 2 years old and situated in the pretty village of Newton. It replaced the former Women's Institute Hall and was rebuilt on the same "footprint". The hall also serves the village of Bywell and surrounding settlements. The villages of Newton and Bywell have approximately 400 residents between them and despite the low population it serves, the hall has an impressive number of regular user groups and 'one-off' commercial hirers.

The Visitors were very impressed by the systems used and the efficiency of the management committee, and had no hesitation in recommending this hall for a Hallmark 1 Award.

Newton and Bywell Community Hall is a member of the West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium.

Society of Local Council Clerks Northumberland Branch Training Day



A captivated audience of clerks



Alnwick Rugby Club provided a splendid buffet lunch and even the sun shone on what turned out to be a very enjoyable day!

The Northumberland Branch of SLCC held its first Training Day at Alnwick Rugby Club on 22nd April. 20 clerks from around the county attended and 7 new members joined the Society on the day. This was a very encouraging step for the Branch, which is always pleased to welcome new members. Community Action Northumberland was represented at the event, providing support and advice and the SLCC bookstall did a roaring trade in Council handbooks.

Many thanks to the speakers, Richard Walden (SLCC Branch Development Officer), Alan Fairchild (SLCC External Affairs Officer), Jamie Corrigan (SLCC Regional Advisor) and Peter Basnett (SLCC Branch Treasurer), who all gave very interesting and enlightening talks on topics including The Clerk's Profession, Local Council Finance and Audit, together with a Q&A Session.

Gillian Turner (Branch Chairman) said "The Training Day was a great success for the Northumberland Branch; we were delighted with the attendance and increase in membership on the day. Sincere thanks go to the excellent speakers and to all the branch members involved in the organisation of the event. We hope to build on this success in the future."

It is anticipated that further events will be organised in the future so that the Northumberland Branch can increase awareness of the benefits of SLCC membership and support.

For further information about the Society or for local Branch membership details, please contact: Diana Carney (Branch Secretary) 01661 852498 diana_carney@hotmail.com

Local Government Reform for local groups

A digest of news compiled by David Francis.

LOCALITY TEAM

This team, managed by Ailsa Coverdale, will be developing a close relationship with parish councils and local voluntary organisations. It will support the community forums, area partnerships and area committees, and will work with other bodies (including CAN) to support community-led planning processes at parish and locality levels. The team-members include Lynda Fakir, Susi Goncu, Richard Powell, Gillian Simmons and John Cooper. Stephen Hume and Kevin Bartlett are also supporting this work, on a shorter-term basis.

CHARGES AND CONCESSIONS

To allow time for a more-considered review of these matters, NCC agreed to continue unchanged the current agreements with local councils regarding for example, grass-cutting, waste-recycling, cemetery management, hire of premises, etc. This means a continuation for the time-being of a mixed picture of charges, discounts and free-of-charge services.

However, it emerged in April that a similar across-the-board approach was not established for the VCS. It is therefore possible that some VCS bodies may unexpectedly receive invoices for the first time, relating to (for example) room-hire or photocopying services. No examples have yet come to light.

More positively, the work which was undertaken in Autumn 2008 with Revenues and Benefits staff has resulted in a coherent and acceptable county-wide framework for handling charitable rates relief. All holders of VCS property were contacted in January/February and invited to apply for relief. These applications are now being assessed and processed.

LOCAL COUNCILS' CHARTER

The Charter was agreed by NCC Executive in February and by the full Council in April. A group of people from NCC and local councils now needs to be established to oversee the implementation and delivery of the Charter.

VCS FUNDING

The NCC budget/Medium-Term Financial Strategy makes provision for a continuation of the annual funding of VCS running costs which had previously been funded from the seven predecessor authorities' core budgets. Contact and discussions with each recipient are now in hand. The budget also included new provision for 'VCS infrastructure support', thereby picking-up on what had been short-term support from the NSP. A framework for deploying £50k per annum per Area Community Chest is to be put in place. The budget also includes a continuation of the £15k per annum per councillor 'Members Capital Scheme' which is available for VCS and local council projects.

COMMUNITY FORUMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

With the Locality Team now in place, work has started to support the development of community forums for each 'locality'. The NSP (Northumberland Strategic Partnership) and its geographical and thematic sub-structure is now undergoing change. Currently the VCS Consortium is arranging appointments from among the VCS to the NSP Board and Executive. NALC (the Northumberland Association of Local Councils) is doing likewise with the local councils' sector. A new phase of locally-led plan-making and performance monitoring will shortly be introduced, linked to the county-wide Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

VCS REVIEW

NCC will soon begin the review of its relationship with the VCS, to put in place new policies and arrangements for grants, concessions, collaboration etc. Conclusions re funding will need to be settled by late Autumn, for implementation in April 2010.

COMMUNICATION

CAN and NALC are working with NCC on basic communication opportunities, to inform the VCS and local councils about the new Authority, its emerging policies and processes, as well as who is responsible for what, where we can contact them, and how they all fit together.



On the buses

for those eligible from 9.30am until 11pm on Mondays to Fridays, and all day at weekends and bank holidays. Within Northumberland, the new council has extended the entitlement to provide travel from 9am.

also have your appointment card.

How to apply....

If you want to apply for a new pass, you can apply by post at Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth NE61 2EF. Alternatively you can apply in person at any Council Information Centre, you can call the customer services team on 0845 600 6400 for more information – your call is charged at local rate – or you can download a form from the county website www.northumberland.gov.uk

What you know....

You probably know that people over the age of 60, and those of any age with a disability, and resident in England, can obtain a bus pass to enjoy free off-peak local bus travel anywhere in England. The national scheme offers free local bus travel

What you may not know....

What you may not know is that if you are unable to travel alone you can get a companion pass to allow one person to travel free with you. Also, if you have a hospital appointment which means you have to travel before 9am you can use your pass provided you

Woodland Burials



Pictured: some of the visiting Parish Councillors and Clerks'

Following the success of the burial training events, organised by Community Action

Northumberland, a site visit took place to the Northumbrian Woodland Burial Site in Bockenfield, in May.

Steve Clarehugh (Proprietor) was one of the speakers in our training session in November 2008 and kindly offered to host a visit to his site, as a follow-on from the training. The visit had to be re-scheduled twice due to heavy snowfall and after weeks of dry weather, the day of the visit was wet and blustery – but it did not deter the visitors!

The trip was a great success and the visitors were clearly impressed. Bockenfield Wood Burial Ground is a former RAF World War 2 site

and was opened in 2000. The site covers approximately 35 acres and the 16,000 trees planted make an impressive show, making it easy to imagine what the site will look like when the woodland areas are fully matured. The area utilised for burials is a wild flower meadow and as burials take place young trees are planted at the head of each grave. The visitors were able to see the layout of the site, the graves, the special children's area and a beautifully planted area for people to sit.

For further information, please contact Steve Clarehugh on 01670 787067

Facing up to flooding

The floods which hit many parts of Northumberland on 6 September 2008 caused considerable disruption, damage, pain and loss to householders, businesses, services and the environment, as well as the deaths of livestock and wildlife. Even though the responsible bodies moved quickly to head-off an even greater crisis, and even though a lot of stories emerged of neighbourly support and care, nevertheless there is a widespread feeling that we all could and should have been better prepared. These floods may be exceptional but we have to assume that they may become more common in the future, most notably as a result of global warming.

Clearly, the effective collaboration of the responsible bodies is important: the Environment Agency, Police, Fire/Rescue Service, Social Services etc. There is also a lot that local people and businesses can contribute, whether in reducing the likely impact of flooding, helping to communicate early warnings, co-operating with

evacuation procedures, encouraging good-practice, providing care, assisting with clear-up and so on.

The needs and responses of different parts of Northumberland will vary, but flooding will produce its own challenges and headaches, whether in town centres or remote villages.

To ensure that all communities are better-equipped to cope with floods, a new Northumberland Community Flooding Partnership is being formed. The partnership will provide information, training, advice and encouragement to parish councils, community networks, householders, farmers, business people, care organisations and other interested parties. It will encourage the effective use of local resources, from tractors to village halls and portable generators. It will promote co-operation with the public services and it will draw upon good practice from elsewhere. It will also help to raise awareness of appropriate commercial/private sector products

and services: from insurance policies to hi-tec sandbags.

The partnership's office will be provided by Northwoods, in Morpeth – a not-for-profit business which is already supporting a number of fire-prevention and response networks in Northern England. A number of the partnership members will facilitate engagement with the relevant sectors, including for example Community Action Northumberland, the National Farmers' Union and the Red Cross.

A partnership manager is currently being recruited, and should be in post by July or August.

In the meantime, further information about the partnership can be viewed in the Business Plan on Northwoods' website www.ruraldevelopment.org.uk or contact Ethan Bigelow on 01670 513292 email ethan.bigelow@ruraldevelopment.org.uk

Dates for your diary



Parish Council Training

A training event for new (or established) parish councillors has been arranged for **MONDAY 6TH July 2009** in Bellingham United Reformed Church Hall

The session will run from 7.00pm – 9.00pm and the usual charge of £3 per person will be made.

If any councillors wish to take part in the training, please contact Carol Megson (Finance Team) for a booking form.

(All parish council clerks on our database should have been contacted by e-mail already)

'Tis time to 'Deck the Hall with rows of funders' once again !!

The first 2009 'Meet The Funders' event will be held at **Stannington Village Hall on TUESDAY JUNE 23RD**.

Following comments, suggestions and feedback from the 2008 series of events, we are 'testing the waters' with a late afternoon/early evening event, on a county-wide basis, rather than over different localities. We have tentatively planned to have the event open from 5pm to 7pm/7.30pm.

Attendance Allowance "Take-up Partners" Event

Tuesday 30th June 2009
10.00am – 11.30am
Hepscott Park, Stannington
NE61 6NF

The take-up of Attendance Allowance in Northumberland isn't as high as in neighbouring areas.

We want to bring together potential partners from Northumberland to discuss the opportunities available to boost the numbers of older people receiving Attendance Allowance.

Request a booking form by phone from Karen Brunt on (01670) 536488 or by email from karen.brunt@northumberlandcaretrust.nhs.uk and return it by 17 June

New Look 'News'



the new-look issues of Community Action Northumberland News, with an A4 format. Larger text and more pictures were requested, so we've

As a result of your comments in the Reader Survey, this is the first of

taken that into account and hope that you like the result. The editorial team would be very interested in your comments, so if you're in touch with CAN or NALC for any reason, (01670 517178), do please let us know your thoughts.

At the moment we are continuing the bi-monthly publication, with the deadline for the next edition being Friday 24 July but after CAN's AGM in November, we will be changing that to seasonal (quarterly), with

between-times electronic bulletins to keep you up to date with any Stop Press items.

If you have any articles which you think would be of interest to our readership, please get in touch by post to The Editor, Community Action Northumberland News, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1PY, or by email to info@ca-north.org.uk. Accompanying photographs would be very welcome too.

Now they're taxing rain!

by dontdrainus.org

A national campaign is now well under way to fight against charges introduced by water companies which bill churches, charities and community buildings, as if they were multi-million pound businesses.

Last year four water companies followed OFWAT (the Government's Water Watchdog) advice to change the basis of charging for the processing of rain water. Non domestic properties would now be charged on the size of their site area instead of the rateable value of the property. Churches, charities, community buildings and clubs, which often had a zero rateable value, suddenly found themselves on

the same scales as large multimillion pound companies. Bills went from virtually nothing to £100 million a year.

The change was introduced without consultation or consideration of its effects. Some charities may be forced to close, affecting many vulnerable and elderly people and communities. The burden has therefore been shifted from users with high rateable values and low areas, such as high street retailers, to organisations with low rateable values and high surface areas. Half of the charge relates to the collection of water from the general highways i.e. nothing to do with premises.

This therefore puts us in the same category as businesses, but they are able to pass on costs to their customers and are more easily able to reduce other costs. In 2000, the government itself said that it would be inappropriate to charge all non-household customers as if they were businesses.

Find out more by visiting the web site www.dontdrainus.org - where you will find news and resources to help lobby for change, including contacting your local MP, signing the Downing Street petition and helping to publicise this issue.

Remember when?



We all use everyday things to jog our memories but for people with memory loss or elderly people it can be very frustrating. Northumberland Libraries are always looking for items that could go into our memory boxes which can be borrowed to work with older people. Morpeth Library lost some objects in the floods and would love to replace them. We would particularly

appreciate items from the 1950's, Rural Life, Shopping, Holidays. Items need to be lightweight, in good condition and easy to handle and can be handed in to any Northumberland Public Library.

If you can help, or would like more information please contact Librarian Shirley Cross by email - Shirley.Cross@northumberland.gov.uk

Safeguarding Vulnerable Users

Community Action Northumberland, in conjunction with Action for Children's Safeguarding Development Worker has prepared a guide to safeguarding vulnerable users of village halls and community buildings. The guide should provide a starting point for management committees to help them think about the safety of their users and help them to create a 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Users Policy' (which includes child protection).

The guidance includes sample policy statements designed for a village hall committee or similar organisation whose community building is hired out for use by other organisations which provide activities or services for vulnerable people (such as playgroups, lunch clubs for the elderly, Crossroads Care, Youth clubs) and which run occasional community events which may be attended by unaccompanied vulnerable people. They are not intended for an organisation which is itself providing regular activities for vulnerable people.

The guidance is available on CAN's website: www.ca-north.org.uk or by phoning CAN on 01670 517178.

Better hospital services?

Local people are being consulted on a £200million package of proposals for hospital services in Northumberland and North Tyneside, to include improvements to Wansbeck and North Tyneside General Hospitals, rebuilding community hospitals in Berwick and Haltwhistle, and the provision of a new specialist emergency care hospital, on an as-yet unidentified site off the A19, near the Moor Farm roundabout, which is envisaged to open in 2012, subject to the outcome of the consultation.

Patients would be taken by a blue-light ambulance to the new hospital

instead of to the local general hospital if they were very ill or had an accident. After a stay of two or three days they would then be discharged back to the hospital nearest to where they live, or home if they are well enough. Very serious accidents and specialist care illnesses would continue to be treated as they are now, at hospitals in Newcastle.

The consultation will continue until 28 July 2009. The consultation booklet and form can be downloaded from www.northoftyne.nhs.uk/Patients/get-involved/consultation-and-discussion_doc and the booklet



is available in large print or on CD by ringing 0191 217 2599

North Northumberland Village Halls Newsletter

by Richard Poppleton

The North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium was set up in 2005 with great support from CAN and many halls in the north of the county are members. NNVHC is planning on producing a regular newsletter and it is hoped that the first edition will be ready for distribution at the

AGM on 2nd June at Felton. If any hall committee has any items they would like to see included in a future edition (it's probably now too late for this first one), do please email the text, with any relevant photos, to Richard Poppleton at richard@greystonecottage.fsnet.co.uk. You

might be wanting to celebrate your achievements or advertising future events or making pleas for help and involvement. Time is always of the essence, so act now or you may forget!

Bright Sparks! By Adrian Hinchcliffe

The West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium held its first meeting for all members on 13 May 2009 when the main topic for the evening was Energy Saving in Village/Community Halls.

Arthur Scott of National Energy Action gave a general presentation on how energy costs can be saved and how village/community halls and other community buildings should be exemplars in the use of energy. Arthur went on to talk about renewable energy technologies and how to carry out an energy audit. Colin Earnshaw, Community Enterprise Officer of the Northumberland National Park also spoke about a number of successful renewable energy projects that were up and running in and around the National Park. Richard

Austin, Funding Officer with the Northumberland National Park also spoke about the sources of funding that are available for energy schemes of all types.

Twenty two members attended the talk and were welcomed by Chairman Mike Wood. They also received a talk from the Secretary, Adrian Hinchcliffe, on the activities undertaken during the last year including the benefits that are being sought for members. They heard that the one-year-old consortium now has 44 members who are enjoying considerable financial benefit in return for the nominal annual membership fee. Membership is still available to those Halls who have not joined and they are guaranteed to save money by doing so.

Become a 'Digital Champion'

- We are offering a range of free modules in Digital and Creative Media subjects, with the aim to create 'Digital Champions'.
- You don't need to have extensive skills in Digital Creative Media just be passionate about learning and passing on your skills to others in your group. We are very interested in hearing about what skills you would like to learn so please complete our survey by following this link www.thedigitalcity.org/survey/.
- To indicate your interests please contact Carmen Thompson on 01642 384567 or email Carmen.thompson@tees.ac.uk.

Licensing Changes

The Licensing Act 2003 came into force on November 25th 2005 and introduced new requirements to the licensing of entertainment and the sale of alcohol in community buildings. Under these regulations, village hall management committees must have a Premises License, covering public entertainments, film shows, indoor sporting events, performances of live music and permission to use the building for the sale of alcohol but to obtain permission for alcohol sales, the village hall management committee has to appoint a Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS), approved by the local authority, and who holds a Personal Licence.

The alternative to this process is for village halls or the hirer of the hall to

use the Temporary Events Notice (TEN) system, on up to 12 occasions a year, to supply alcohol for sale without the need for a DPS. After a period of monitoring the impact of the Act and lobbying and campaigning from various interested groups, consultations with the Department for Culture Media and Sport resulted in the Legislative Reform (Supervision of Alcohol Sales in Church and Village Halls) Order 2009 – which was approved by Parliament in March and is now subject to agreement of the regulations and fees.

The change removes the requirement for village halls to have a Designated Premises Supervisor, holding a Personal License, but instead makes the management committee / board of individuals responsible for managing the

premises, jointly responsible for all sales of alcohol at the premises.

Until the regulations and fees have been agreed and laid down by Parliament, the local authority's (Northumberland Council) licensing department will not be able to provide details of how they will operate, forms or fee levels.

Full details of the Legislative Reform and the consequences for village/church halls can be found on the ACRE website at:- www.acre.org.uk/DOCUMENTS/publications/briefings/LicensingBriefingMarch2009.pdf and on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport website www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/alcohol_and_entertainment/default.aspx

What We Do

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

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

Additionally CAN seeks to

- work in partnership to facilitate the

development of new, and to support existing networks of local voluntary and community groups, in order to enable them to be a mechanism for developing collaborative work across the sector

- influence and work with decision-makers to provide, with partners, conduits for the diverse views of the local voluntary and community sector to be voiced and heard within the decision-making structures, regionally and nationally.

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

CAN News is currently published bi-monthly. 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.

Copy deadline for the next issue is Friday 24 July

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

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