

THEN AND NOW

**How things have
changed
- or not (!) -
in CAN's affairs over
the last 60 years**

The political and economic context:

In 1952, H M Treasury were so enthusiastic about rural community councils that they looked to expand the funding, with a 7-year commitment.

CAN's 1979-80 annual report begins:

"This report is being written in even more apocalyptic circumstances with the deepest recession and highest unemployment rate that most people can remember... never has local authority expenditure been so controlled and restricted."

and now....

'..... the past year was particularly challenging. The economic recession began to impact on the vitality and viability of local groups and organisations..... A range of support mechanisms, including funding streams, were either closed down, or substantially reduced.'

The rural voice

Since the 1950s, CAN has been 'the rural voice' for Northumberland.

In the 1990s, we were part of the North-East Rural Affairs Forum.

In the 2000s, we were part of the NSP Rural Group.

Now, with the decline of regional bodies and the NSP's forum, who will fill the vacuum?

Computers

In 1986, CAN was given its first computer. It was used mostly for data storage and word processing. Chief Officer Alec Trotter escaped just before its delivery!

Now, all staff and most community groups have their own ICT, and most of CAN's communication is via email and the website.

Rural intelligence

In the 1950s, we researched: rural depopulation; the operation and viability of bus services; and availability of mains electricity.

In the 1980s and 1990s we researched the job prospects of school leavers in the Rothbury and Wooler areas, and changes in rural services.

In the 2000s, we helped communities conduct their own research, via a Research Support Unit.

Now, our colleagues on NCC's Infonet undertake topical research and publish data. Through ACRE, we make data available to communities.

Telecommunication

We lobbied and fought the BBC for better 625-line TV coverage and local radio coverage, in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the 1990s, we took action to promote better mobile phone reception coverage.

In the 2000s, we were unsuccessful in opposing the loss of BT payphones.

In 2011, we are supporting community initiatives to improve Broadband provision.

Tourists and Visitors

We proposed the formation of a Northumberland
Tourist Board in the 1950s.

In the 1960s, we provided advice and funding for
small-scale tourist accommodation.

In the 1980s, we supported community-led
tourism initiatives in Allenheads, followed by
initiatives throughout the county.

In the 1990s, our Access to the Working
Countryside service enabled city residents to visit
and learn about farming and forestry.

**Now, a range of bodies promote tourism,
and support individual initiatives**

Information about local organisations

In 1957, we produced the first directory of voluntary and statutory services and organisations in Northumberland.

In the 1980s, we produced the first guide to local authority grants and in-kind support for the VCS, throughout Northumberland

In 2011, following several years of dramatic change, do we all know 'who does what'?

Volunteering

In the 1980s, we took our first initiative to develop and promote formal volunteering.

Now, this is promoted and supported by Volunteering Northumberland, hosted by Wansbeck CVS.

Slow trains arriving



Longhorsley's Village Hall opened in 1993.
The project was first mooted in 1952!

The Government tried to reorganise Northumberland's local authorities in 1993, but gave up. They tried again in 2004, and **eventually created the new unitary authority in 2009.**

People in Cramlington and Stakeford sought CAN's advice about creating parish councils in 1986. **These came into fruition in 2009.**

Northumberland in Europe

In 1986, our first contact with EU funding was to help the PreSchool Playgroup Association to secure an ESF grant.

In the 1990s and 2000s, we 'led' 2 LEADER programmes and administered the Objective 5b and 2 programmes for Northumberland's rural communities.

We mobilised community clusters throughout the county to operate local grants schemes.

Our involvement since 2008 has been very small, but 3 LEADER programmes now cover most of rural Northumberland.

Support for young people

In the 1950s, we highlighted the exodus of young people from the countryside.

In the 1970s and 1980s, we supported and helped revive the PreSchool Playgroup Association and its local groups.

In the 1990s, we highlighted and addressed youth homelessness, and helped develop many other new VCS youth projects.

Community competitions

In the 1950s we began the Best Kept Village Competition, primarily to address problems with litter.

From the 1980s, we ran Village Ventures and Village of the Year competitions.

CAN no longer runs competitions, but annual 'Britain/Northumbria in Bloom' competitions are now highly successful

Electricity supplies

In the 1990s, we researched
rural electrification',
and lobbied the electricity boards.

In the 1990s, our 'Electricity for Enterprise'
project supported better off-mains services.

In the 2000s, our 'Renewable Energy at the
Local Level' service encouraged community
groups to use new renewable technology.

**We continue to promote fuel and energy
initiatives.**

Housing for local needs

In the 1980s, we worked with several village communities to provide new social housing.

We also created one of the first Rural Housing Enabler posts.

In 1990, we created a Housing Land Bank, to help responsible land-owners to provide land at low or no price for social housing.

In 2009, the Government-sponsored Matthew Taylor Report called for a fresh impetus to make social housing happen in villages.

Helping the funders

Since the 1950s, at various times we have helped funders to target their grant-aid effectively on local initiatives in Northumberland:

- Carnegie
- County and district councils
- European programmes
- Baring Foundation
- Knott, Joicey, Rothley, LloydsTSB, Northern Rock.... etc

In 1985 we helped form what is now FINE (Funding Information North East).

This continues to be a key part of our work.

Helping development trusts

In 1987, we helped form Northumberland's first development trust: Allenheads.

In the 1990s and 2000s, we supported several dozen more. In some cases, we provided the initial staffing and administration.

Now they have their own active and mutually-supportive network: FONDT (Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts)

Community-led planning

In 1971, we supported probably the first-ever village plan: 'Stocksfield—an Experiment in Democracy.'

In the 1990s and 2000s, Community-led planning has been integral to a range of regeneration programmes.

In 2011, the Government are preparing to give statutory force to the 'planning' aspects of CLPs.

Community gardening

In the 1950s, we were supporting the Northumberland Garden and Produce Association, with origins in the WW2 'Dig for Victory' movement.

Now, we are supporting community orchards and various allotments initiatives.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Northumberland's CABx were formed in World War 2, but they closed at the war end.

With NACAB support, our Northumberland Advice and Information Project created district-led CABx throughout the county, between 1975 and 1985.

CABx remain an active and effective force: a first port of call for people in need.

Supporting farming

Traditionally, the Government has provided its own support systems for farmers.

In 1952, we began courses in Kirkley Hall in maintaining combine harvesters.

In the late 1980s, we ran a farm-visit initiative for British Food and Farming Year, which became 'Access to the Working Countryside'

In time for the 2001 Foot and Mouth crisis, we operated a Rural Stress Initiative, providing support to isolated farming families.

NALC and local councils

Our close link with NALC and local (parish and town) councils has existed from the start.

This provides a 'seamless service' to the councils, and an integrated means of working with local communities.

In 2011, the relationship is as strong as ever

Community buildings

In 1951, we were advising individual village hall projects, and helping the Carnegie Trust to deploy its grant aid.

Over the decades, the funders have changed—
district councils, NCC, Rural Development
Forum, Lottery

In the 1970s, we ran conferences and competitions
for village halls.

In the 2000s, we developed and supported two mu-
tual support networks, for the North and the West.
They are flourishing.

Bus services

In the 1950s, we researched the operation and
validity of rural bus services, and we lobbied
persistently for many years for the Government to
develop a means of co-ordinating and subsidising
the network.

**Eventually, we were successful and the
County Council fulfils this role.**