



# NEWS

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## Communities and Clusters MOVING FORWARD

By David Francis CAN and NALC

NORTHUMBERLAND'S NATURAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE is a way of viewing and organising Northumberland at a variety of levels or scales which reflect the needs and perceptions of the county's people, institutions and sectors. It is a recognition that the concept of community may mean something different, depending on the question that is asked. Since the introduction of the idea in late 2005, 4 layers of community have been identified:

- **The local community:** maybe the parish, village, neighbourhood, estate or small town. There are several hundred such areas in Northumberland
- **Belonging Community:** the wider local area consisting of a number of local communities, amounting currently to 27 in total
- **Area (formerly 'characteristic community'):** the 3 sub-divisions on which the new Unitary Authority will base its committee structures, and services are being tailored to meet the different needs of these areas.
- **County (formerly 'association community'):** the entire administrative area of Northumberland.

The NSP (Northumberland Strategic Partnership) has spent a great deal of time (and effort) in 2006 and 2007 in consultation with parish councils, LSPs (district-level

Local Strategic Partnerships) and others, to arrive at the map and boundaries of the Belonging Communities. It was always envisaged that Belonging Communities would be a mixed bunch: ranging from individual towns, through towns-and-hinterlands, to clusters of rural parishes.

It is a strength of the Belonging Community concept that they are based on 'what feels right', rather than on an attempt to achieve uniformity. They do not even necessarily follow council ward boundaries. In many instances, they are recognisable as the pre-1974 borough or district council areas.

Now that the map is pretty much settled, attention is turning to bringing each Belonging Community to life, through the development of community forums. An ambitious consultation programme will be undertaken by teams which are drawn from the local authorities, Community Action Northumberland, and others, in every area, starting in late February. Opinions will be sought on key questions, such as:

- *what are the issues that a forum at this level will best deal with?*
- *how do we ensure there is no duplication or conflict with existing bodies, such as parish councils?*
- *how will the new authority's elected members fit in?*
- *how big or small should a forum be, and who should be the members?*
- *how will each forum relate to and engage with its constituents?*
- *how will a forum reflect both mainstream and also specialist or minority needs?*
- *can an existing body or network become the forum, or will something new be needed?*
- *should minimum standards be set, both for the forums and for the behaviour of their members?*
- *what sort of support and resourcing will be needed?*

(Continued on back page)

### CAN Spring Meeting

STANNINGTON VILLAGE HALL will host our Spring Meeting on Wednesday afternoon 7 May 2008, beginning 2.30pm. Guest speakers will address the subject of the past and the future of LEADER in Northumberland. More detail will appear in the April issue of CAN News.

### The most Northerly parish... in the World!

The residents of Berwick / Tweedmouth / Spittal are poised to join the ranks of the rest of Northumberland, with the imminent formation of a parish-level Town Council. This follows some years of promotional and consultation work by Berwick Borough Council. The idea was first mooted in the 1990's, but it has taken sometime for people to warm to the idea. Now, with the knowledge that the Borough Council will disappear into the new Northumberland-wide authority in 2009, the support of local people and organisations is both enthusiastic and widespread.

The new Town Council will be a voice for the local community, to influence a range of decision makers, many of whom will inevitably be located outside the immediate area. In common with all other parish councils, the Council will also be able to exercise a wide range of executive functions, providing a range of local services such as public open spaces, burials, leisure and arts facilities, tourism provision etc. as well as supporting groups and initiatives in the wider community.

Unique in Northumberland, Berwick Town Council will also inherit some key historical and civic responsibilities: for example, a close working relationship with the Freeman; the annual Riding of the Bounds; the Mayor and Sheriff roles; the Borough status and the associated insignia.

The Council is being created through provisions in the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, which gives the Secretary of State (DCLG) the final decision. Apparently, there are many such proposals in the 'pending tray' in Whitehall, and it is only through local MP Alan Beith's persistence that Berwick's case has at last moved forward.

Legally, the new Council will come into being on 1 April 2008, but it will not take full effect until its first elections, on 1 May this year. In the meantime, the Borough Council has set an initial council tax precept for it, of £46350, and some of the local borough members will undertake a caretaker role until the elections. Thereafter, the duly elected members will run the show: setting the budget, appointing staff, deciding on priorities, engaging with other bodies and so on. Training and specialist advice will continue to be available, through the Borough Council, NALC and other sources.

### ... And coming soon, to Wansbeck

Moves are also afoot to establish parish councils throughout the Wansbeck area. Initially, local people organised a petition to create a parish for Newbiggin. The interest spread, and last Autumn Wansbeck District Council undertook a consultation throughout the whole district. A sizeable majority supported the idea of parishing all areas, and these proposals have now been forwarded to the Government. It is unlikely that these could be put in place during 2008, but the new Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 may enable a faster-track review process led by the District Council, to introduce parishing during 2009.



Host Betty and Elsie have tea

CONTACT THE ELDERLY is a national charity with 311 groups all over the United Kingdom. We help to combat the loneliness so often felt by very elderly people who live alone. One Sunday afternoon a month, our volunteers enjoy driving elderly people to a volunteers' home for tea, talk and companionship - so simple, yet it changes lives, enhances well-being, and creates great new friendships across the generations.

Our new group in Rothbury, which is about to be launched, has places for a few more elderly members. The group also needs a few more hosts to hold an afternoon tea party one Sunday afternoon a year, could you spare a few hours to make a huge difference to local elderly people? You will also have great fun!

Ivy, who is 92, had been on the waiting list to join a Contact-the-Elderly group for a year, finally a place was available and she attended her first two tea parties. Although she felt a bit shy, she enjoyed being dressed up in her 'good clothes' and listening to all the chat and laughter. She missed the third month as she was not feeling well. When she arrived at the next party, another group member called over to her, "Where were you last month Ivy, we missed you". Ivy burst into tears. Everyone was trying to comfort her, and find out what was wrong. When she was settled in a chair with a cup of strong tea, she said, "I'm so sorry to cry like that but it has been 30 years since anyone told me they missed me".

Housebound elderly people have so few options for social contact so it's good to know that isolated people in the region will soon benefit from the launch of a new group. Please let me know of anyone who would benefit from this free service.

For more information please contact Rachel Welch on either 01661 842 349 or free phone 0800 716543, or visit [www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk](http://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk)

# NORTHUMBERLAND

## Village of the Year 2008

By Alan Hedley

THE FIRST CALOR VILLAGE OF THE YEAR® competition was launched in 1997 and Northumberland villages started entering the competition in 2005. Community Action Northumberland is again organising the Calor Northumberland Village of the Year Competition 2008 and is seeking entries from villages or free-standing settlements with a population of no more than 5,000, located in the historical county area of Northumberland (including Northern Tyne and Wear).

The competition is not about pretty window boxes and the village green. The entry categories cover a variety of community issues such as communications, the village's young people, the environment, and the elderly.

Entrants are asked to complete 4 sections on the entry form, describing the vibrant, enterprising and caring qualities that are found in their village. The 4 sections are People; Environment; Business; and Communications. Within each section there are a number of questions and suggested activities which may or may not be appropriate to your community. You are invited to write a profile of your community for each section, addressing the questions, where appropriate, and adding relevant information on any other activities that might demonstrate your prowess in the category covered.

Finally the entry form invites you to say in no more than 500 words "What makes my village special". This will help the judges compose a stronger picture of how your community operates. The majority of entries come from the rural districts of Northumberland.

CAN would also like to encourage entries from villages in the South East of the county. If there are any community groups in the Wansbeck and Blyth Valley area that think their village deserves to be recognised we hope they will contact CAN for an entry form and guidelines to the competition.

Previous winners of the Northumberland Village of the Year competition are Wingates, Allendale and Acklington. Your village could be next so why not request an entry form to see the detail involved? Entry forms are available from CAN's website, [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk) or by telephoning CAN's Morpeth office, 01670 517178 or by emailing [villageoftheyear2008@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:villageoftheyear2008@ca-north.org.uk)

The closing date for receipt of entries is 30 May 2008. Later in the year the overall winner in Northumberland will have the added honour of being nominated to go forward to represent the county in the prestigious Calor Village of the Year® for England competition 2008/9. This will give them the opportunity of gaining recognition at national level as well as a share of a prize fund totalling more than £36,000.

## VCS Consortium Conference

Calling all voluntary and community organisations and groups active in Northumberland

### Belonging to What?

**When?** Monday 17 March 2008 10.00am - 2.00pm (coffee from 9.30am)

**Where?** Choppington Welfare, Choppington, NE62 5SR

**Why?** To hear and question those leading the reform in our local government and discover what it will mean for our sector...and there's a very good buffet lunch.

**How?** By contacting Sue Andrew on 01670 517178 [sueandrew@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:sueandrew@ca-north.org.uk)

## Parish Council Regulations Round-up

THE FOLLOWING IS A REMINDER of various regulatory matters of interest to parish councils which have recently been introduced, or are in the pipeline:

**Audit timetable:** the timetable for parish council audits is being brought forward progressively. For the 2007-08 accounts, Approval of the Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement must be completed by 31 July 2008, and the Publication of these must happen by 31 October 2008. In 2009, both of these deadlines will be brought forward by one month.

**Auditors:** the Government has reviewed the 'suppliers' of external audit to parish councils, and it is likely that BDO (based in Southampton) will continue to be the auditors for our area.

**Proper Practices:** a new version of the catchily-titled 'Governance and Accountability of Local Councils in England and Wales: a Practitioners' Guide', is soon to be published on the web. Although relatively few parish councils actually own a copy of the original version, it does specify the 'proper practices' to which every council must have regard.

**Quality status:** the criteria for this system are currently under review. They are likely to have some bearing on the ability of parish councils to operate the new 'power of well-being', as provided in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

**Freedom of Information:** work is well advanced re the development of a new model Publication Scheme for parish councils. Every parish council must adopt such a Scheme, and make it widely known.

**Section 137:** the index for calculating the expenditure limit relating to section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 will be increased from £5.64p in 2007-08 to £5.86p in 2008-09. Section 137 is the wide-ranging power which enables a parish council to spend money on activities, property, services etc which they are satisfied will benefit all or part of their community and for which there is not a more specific power. The annual limit is calculated by multiplying the index by the number of electors in the parish council area.

**UK Independence:** In some parts of the country, UK Independence supporters have invoked a Parish Poll - in effect, a local referendum - on the question of whether the UK should remain in membership of the European Union. The Audit Commission has now confirmed that this is not a lawful subject for a parish poll, and so any expenditure so incurred by a local authority (parish or district) would be ultra-vires.

For guidance on the above, or on any other regulatory issue, please contact David Francis at NALC, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth NE61 1PY, telephone number: 01670 517178 or by email on [davidfrancis@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:davidfrancis@ca-north.org.uk)

## MAKING THE MOST OF A "FACE TO FACE" FUNDING ADVICE SESSION

ORGANISATIONS LIKE CAN and the CVS's covering Wansbeck and Blyth Valley regularly organise Funding Advice events at which they arrange for representatives of grant making trusts to be present to give specific advice on grants they make. This is a very valuable service but some people come without giving sufficient thought on what they want to ask the funders. The following tips have been prepared by Jane Hart (CAN's Community Development Officer at Tynedale) and are based on information supplied by Jim Mackison of the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland to whom CAN is grateful.

### Top tip - be prepared

Try to read the funder's guidance and application form beforehand. You can then double-check details with the funder's representative.

Come prepared with key questions. For example:

- *Is our organisation eligible for your funding?*
- *Is this the type of project that you fund?*
- *What is a reasonable amount to apply for?*
- *How do we answer this question in the application form?*
- *What level of information do you require?*
- *Is this a strength that we should emphasise?*
- *Is this a weakness we should work on?*

During your slot you might want to make your questions specific to the funder that you are talking to. Remember you can ask general funding questions of your Community Action Northumberland funding advisor at any time.

### Top tip - use your time wisely

Remember that your time with each funder's representative will probably be limited, with other people waiting their turn. If you spend 9 minutes of your 10 minute slot talking about your project, that only leaves 1 minute for the funder's representative to give you guidance and you won't gain much benefit from the session. You don't need to use valuable time

## GRANTS FROM THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

THE FOLLOWING FUNDS at the Community Foundation are now seeking applications:

### Specials Laboratory Fund

The Specials Laboratory Fund makes grants to voluntary and community projects in Prudhoe and surrounding areas. Grants up to £5,000 will be considered for any type of community activity in and around Prudhoe. This fund meets three times a year so there is no deadline.

### Bellingham Fund

The Bellingham Fund meets once a year to distribute grants for voluntary and community projects in Bellingham. Grants of up to £1,000 will be considered. The deadline for applications is 29 February 2008.

To apply for a grant from either of these funds download a general application from the Community Foundation website [www.communityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk). For more information contact Kate Bradley on 0191 222 0945.

## CILCA STUDY GROUP - PARISH COUNCIL CLERKS

ARE YOU A CLERK interested in, or currently undertaking the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) ?

Community Action Northumberland hosts a 'study group' for clerks who are working towards this qualification. It is an opportunity to meet with other clerks to discuss the portfolio and give encouragement to each other.

If you are interested in joining us, or for more information, please contact Louise Currie on 01670 500816 / 517178 or email [louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk)

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 6th from 7.00pm - 9.00pm. It will take place in the CAN offices, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth.

to 'sell' your project to the funder's representative as they will be unable to award a grant there and then!

It is best if you can summarise the key points about your organisation, your project and what you are looking for in terms of funding. The funder's representative can then give you their first impressions and highlight essential points that you need to consider.

If the funder's representative does express doubts about some aspect of your project, don't try to defend your proposal; listen to their concerns and think about how you can allay these concerns before making an application.

It is your time slot to ask the questions that you want to ask. Don't be afraid to ask about whatever you need to know. There is no such thing as a 'silly' question.

For more information visit our website: [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)

## HALLMARK SCHEME UPDATE

YOU WILL NO DOUBT be aware that CAN is leading on the Hallmark Scheme - which is an accredited quality standard for village halls and community buildings. The scheme aims to:

- *encourage, establish and reward good practice*
- *encourage improvement in established management customs and procedures*
- *obtain recognition from other bodies, of a standard of management of community facilities*

Training of the twelve 'Visitors' (assessors) took place in November 07. We are now almost ready to begin assessing the halls/buildings that have expressed interest in taking part in the scheme. The first two halls, Whitley Chapel and Felton, will be assessed in February and this will form part of the 'Visitor' training.

After this has taken place, Louise Currie will contact all the registered halls/buildings and will send out the Hallmark Application Form to each. Once the hall/building has applied, two 'Visitors' will make direct contact with them, to make arrangements for their assessment visit. (This will be undertaken only when the hall/building is ready).

We would welcome anyone in the middle/west of the county, who would be interested in becoming one of our 'Visitors'. Please contact Louise Currie - details below. (Please note that 'Visitors' must be, or have been, a member of a village hall/community building management committee)

If you want further details or information - or if you want to register interest in the scheme, please contact Louise Currie on 01670 500816 / 517178 or by e-mail - [louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk) and she will be happy to help.

# PAYING THE PIPER FOR AN EVEN BETTER TUNE

By George Courtice

WHEN IT COMES TO RAISING MONEY the voluntary and community sector has few rivals. The majority of the county's 2000 plus sporting clubs, hobby groups, village halls, playgroups and community associations are self-supporting in as much as they raise their own money to fund their activities.

Others make application to outside funding sources including Charitable Trusts and Foundations, Big Lottery, European Structural Funds, District Authorities, other public bodies and Central Government programmes. Most of our six Districts do offer small grant programmes to community groups but there are wide disparities between them and some of them are stop-start, leading to great uncertainty from year to year. In addition the actual or threatened reduction in the amount of discretionary rate relief in some Districts for community buildings has also had a negative impact.

All Districts, to a greater or lesser extent, contribute to the costs of running the Citizens Advice Bureaux in their areas but often it is a small proportion of the CAB's total costs - about 12% in Berwick. Blyth Valley Borough Council, on the other hand, is more generous to its CAB and provides about one third of its total costs.

Nationally one out of every three pounds flowing into the voluntary and community sector, or what the government now calls the Third Sector, originates from government programmes. Much of this finds its way to large national charities to fund public services purchased by statutory bodies. This is particularly so in the areas of children's services, health and adult social care.

## Supporting the Sector

One way of helping voluntary and community organisations is to ensure that they have ready access to the support they need. In Northumberland the supply of these include the two CVSS serving Wansbeck and Blyth Valley, Community Action Northumberland, volunteer centres, and, more recently Northumberland Community Development Network (NCDN). Between them they advise, signpost, train and inform voluntary and community organisations and groups throughout the county. They also act as advocates for the sector. Some services are managed by other agencies like development trusts and specialists like Northumbria Youth, ADAPT, VoiCeS and the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

The funding for the bulk of these support services has tended to come from government programmes but some of these end in March. More disturbingly, from April 2009, a major contributor to this pot, the Single Programme managed by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, will also cease.

Obvious potential sources of support are Northumberland's Local Authorities - soon to emerge as a new single unitary authority, wherein lies a problem. Support from local government appears to be more limited for Northumberland's VCS than most other sub-regions of the North East, or for that matter, other areas of Britain. Historically, financial contributions to organisations supporting the sector in Northumberland have been noticeably more sparing than those of neighbouring authorities (see table below).

The uncertainties surrounding the Northern Rock Foundation and the continued raids from the Olympics on Lottery Funds mean that a contraction of support services will make life even more difficult for frontline organisations.

What is required is a clear, multi-year commitment from the new authority to make up the shortfalls in order to allow us the capacity to help lever in further investment. There are hints that the message is getting through.

Local Authorities	£ total / year	pence / head / year
Newcastle	182,000	70
North Tyneside	192,000	65
Cumbria	225,000	46
Northumberland	55,700	18

## BELL VIEW FREE FRIDAYS

ARE YOU LOOKING for a venue in North Northumberland to hold a meeting, staff awayday, training day, presentation or small conference?

Every Friday during the months of February and March 'Bell View', a registered charity, is offering new customers the free use of rooms in the Bell View Resource Centre.

The centre was completed 3 years ago and is a modern, accessible building, with parking on site, café and numerous meeting rooms and has all the facilities you could need.

With friendly, approachable, helpful staff and volunteers they have broadband facilities, photocopying, overhead projectors, powerpoint, flipcharts and catering facilities.

This is a once only offer to promote the centre and what it has to offer. There is no obligation for further bookings, but of course they would like you to consider using them again.

For a brochure and conditions of the offer contact: Paul Harrison, Resource Centre Development Manager, Bell View, Bell View Resource Centre, 33 West Street, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7QB. Tel: 01668 219220. Or e-mail: bellview-belford@tiscali.co.uk



Working on rag rugs in one of the available rooms on free offer

# CAN'S NEW TRUSTEES

AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED Community Action Northumberland recently welcomed six trustees. In previous issues we have introduced Richard Poppleton, Sue Ashmore, Sonja Bailes and Anne James and we now welcome George Scott who also takes on the role of vice chairman.

## GEORGE SCOTT

George Scott has lived for most of his life in Seahouses, where his family's butchers business is based. He is married to Pat and they have two grown-up children. After school and University, which included a year as a teaching assistant in France, he taught in Hull and then for many years in Berwick-upon-Tweed. He is now a part-time teacher in Ashington and Seahouses.

Throughout his life he has been involved in community affairs. A former parish and borough councillor, he was Mayor of Berwick-upon-Tweed 1982-83. He is chairman of the European Leader+ local action group for North Northumberland and of the Berwick Youth Project. He is a Methodist local preacher and was for many years conductor of the Seahouses Fishermen's Choir. He now sings with the Village Voices choir based in Seahouses.



## Not Enough Space

CAN USES ITS BI MONTHLY NEWSPAPER to help it in supporting local communities with information and advice on a variety of subjects. As well as articles produced in house it receives and publishes items from other charities, voluntary groups and community organisations. It is not always possible to publish all these articles in full. In this issue we are trialling publishing some of these articles on our website, [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk) in the library > publications section, alongside the pdf versions of CAN News. Do have a look for these items:

## COME AND JOIN US

by Sylvia Harrison

THESE DAYS there is so much legislation, so many rules and regulations affecting Village Halls that it comes as a relief to find that there is an organisation where Halls can get together to speak with one voice and share their concerns as well as the knowledge they have gained through their experiences.

Such an organisation is The North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium which has become a force to be reckoned with since its inauguration in April 2006.

Members have benefited from special discounts arranged on insurance premiums, (one hall now pays over £700 a year less) and the cost of fire extinguisher checks; they have learnt how they can cut the costs of fuel (one hall's electricity bill was halved); taken part in training sessions in food safety and in fire awareness; and watched a demonstration of a software system to manage bookings.

At our meetings, (which are enjoyable and fairly informal) ideas and information are exchanged on a wide range of topics of interest to us all and networks are formed and strengthened.

Here are the answers to some of the questions asked about the Consortium:-

### Why was the Consortium formed?

To benefit Village Halls and similar establishments in the Borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed and in Alnwick District

### Who manages the Consortium's affairs?

A Committee elected by the members

### How often do the members meet?

Quarterly

### Where do they meet?

At Village Halls alternately in the Berwick and Alnwick areas

### Can any Hall join?

Any Hall that is a Community Building

### How much does it cost?

£10 a year

For more information or to receive an enrolment form, contact Sylvia Harrison on 01670 787127 or email her on [sylvia.harrison2@talktalk.net](mailto:sylvia.harrison2@talktalk.net).

Community Action Northumberland has been supportive of the Consortium since its inception.

The next meeting of the Consortium is to be held at Longhorsley Village Hall on 17th April at 7 for 7.30 pm. All Village Halls are welcome to send one or more representatives for a 'taster'.

**Highlights Rural Touring Scheme** are a registered Charity based in Cumbria that works in partnership with over 50 voluntary promoting groups to bring high-quality professional theatre, music, dance and craft events to village halls, schools and community centres.

They organise over 80 events a year for villages in the North Pennines and surrounding areas, ensuring that people living in rural areas have access to exciting and entertaining professional events without having to travel long distances.

Their Spring Season is now booked up and enquiries from Halls and Community Centres are invited for future seasons. Read more in the "Not enough space 2801" on CAN's website.

**Pitch your project** is a Dragon's Den type TV programme being backed by James Caan, entrepreneur and "dragon" on BBC 2's Dragons' Den.

Pitch your project is run by TimeBank in partnership with the NHS Foundation Trust Network and is looking for innovative and effective ways in which volunteers can support the delivery of health and wellbeing services. These may be either inside or outside of the health system. They may be based in the community or within an institution.

One of the entrants is the Bell View Project in Belford, a multi purpose resource centre incorporating day care for older people. With prizes of up to £1,000 to be won and a closing date of 3 March 2008 it could be worth your while to find out more in "Not enough space 2801"

**Autism Speaks**, the only UK charity set up solely to raise money for autism research, is returning to The Alnwick Garden for a second Walk for Autism Research on Sunday, 4th May 2008. 2007's walk was such a success - 700 supporters, families and friends turned up in the rain, raised just under £26,000 and enjoyed a really happy day. For more details see "Not enough space 2801" on CAN's website or call Lynn Hart on 01491 411 569.

The Northern Rock Foundation is holding a funding advice event at the Assembly Rooms Newcastle on 4th March. This is an opportunity to meet the team managing the 2008 Grant Programmes. Full details in "Not enough space 2801".

# Hexham Forum Cinema is celebrating a new lease of life

IN FEBRUARY 2007 the business was bought by the Hexham Community Partnership with funding support from Tynedale Council and One NorthEast via the Northumberland Strategic Partnership.

Having secured a 21 year lease, Hexham Community Partnership is now operating the cinema on a commercial basis, continuing to employ the team of staff under manager and chief projectionist Andrew Healey.

Work to develop office space for the Community Partnership has been undertaken and the cinema now provides a permanent town centre base for the Partnership. The Coffee Bar is open daily from 10.30 to 12.30 and provides a perfect venue for informal meetings enjoying fair trade tea and coffee, and views of the Market Place.

All profits generated by the cinema will be used for the benefit of the town and surrounding areas in line with the aim of the Partnership that Hexham will be an increasingly vibrant, enterprising and adaptable market town in which to live, work or be a visitor.

The Community Partnership is already working closely with other organisations in the town - graphic design students from QEHS are working on interior design and branding for the cinema as part of their AS level course work and media studies students attended a workshop by locally based film maker Dan Elliott.

Special screenings for children with special needs are being arranged and a new Kids Club has just started. The activities start every Saturday at 11 a.m. and are organised by the Hexham Youth Initiative, with the film starting at 11.30 a.m.

The cinema also now offers a foreign film at least once a month, at 6 p.m. on the first Sunday of the month, which is proving popular.

The Friends of the Forum was launched in September last year. Annual membership entitles subscribers to 3 free tickets plus discount off all other admissions, as well as other benefits.

Future plans to improve disabled access, introduce online booking, and make the fullest possible use of the cinema will be implemented over the coming months and years as opportunities and finances allow.



The Forum Cinema

## Communities and Clusters...

(Continued from front page)

- should each forum have its own plan, and a budget?
- can forums develop a role for themselves, beyond being a 'voice' to influence official decisions?

In each area, the consultation will require perhaps 2 or 3 meetings, spread over a number of months to allow those who participate to refer back to their own communities or groups. Subsequently, support will be available, both from within local government and outside, to enable belonging community forums to establish themselves and to grow in confidence so that they can engage effectively with the authorities and other key bodies. It is hoped that there will be forums in all areas, in good time before the new authority takes full effect in April 2009.

Beyond Belonging Community forums, this new 'map' of Northumberland will in turn raise questions and present new opportunities for how other aspects of the voluntary and community sector are organised. For example, should training events for parish councils, or indeed any other community group, be organised at a Belonging Community or Area Level? Should county-wide voluntary bodies align their internal structures to the three areas? Should other activities, such as European programmes, align themselves to this new map?

And finally.....yes, we know that 'Belonging Community' is a bit of a mouthful. Maybe someone will find a title which is brief, descriptive and guaranteed not to cause confusion with the other 'layers' of community!

## TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

by Alan Hedley

IMPORTANT AGENDA ITEMS for any Annual General Meeting is the presentation of the annual accounts and the trustees report (sometimes referred to as the Chairman's report). Often in village halls and other community buildings this has been a verbal presentation. In recent years as more halls exceed the £10,000 annual income figure they realise that a written trustees report is required by the Charity Commission along with the Hall's annual return and update.

Quite a high proportion of village halls and community buildings have their financial year ending in March or April. Consequently their Annual General Meetings tend to fall within the following two months. This then is probably an opportune moment to remind Hall trustees of the requirements of the Charity Commission.

The Charity Act 2006 requires registered charities to submit an annual return. The Annual Return is made up of three parts; Charity Information (including update of trustees), Financial Information and Trustees Report. How many of those parts you are required to submit depends upon your income for the year. Broadly speaking, charities with an income of less than £10,000 will not need to submit a Trustees Report.

Although many halls will therefore not be required to submit a Trustees Report, CAN recommends that they still prepare one for presentation at their AGM. The standard requirements for the Report are:

- name of the Charity and registration number
- address of the Charity (the secretary's address)
- nature of the governing document (Trust Deed, Community Association Constitution)
- name of the all the Charity Trustees who have served during the year
- objects /aims of the Charity ( to be found in the governing document)
- how the Charity is organised (number of elected, appointed, co-opted members, paid staff)
- name and address of bankers, independent examiner, solicitor(if used frequently)
- information on activities of the charity (such as number of user groups, number of times hall has been used during year, whether bookings are up or down from previous year, any new users in the year or ceased users, and any other relevant information)
- information on financial activities

The Trustees Report needs to be discussed and agreed by the trustees before the AGM.

If your Trustees have never completed a Report then the first one will be the most difficult but it will provide a template for future years. The Charity Commission also provide a template which can be downloaded from <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc16.asp>

The most convenient way to submit the required documents is through the Charity Commission's on-line facilities.

Nearly 50 halls in Northumberland have registered their interest in the Hallmark Scheme and CAN have produced more detailed information on this subject to help them. All halls are welcome to contact CAN (either Alan Hedley or Louise Currie at the Morpeth Office or their local Community Development Officer). Contact details on the back page of this publication.

## 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

CAN is anxious to ensure that it effectively supports local communities and therefore operates a process of continuous evaluation. This requires feedback from our users. Any comments on services provided 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.

Community Action Northumberland News is 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 at Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1PY or email items direct to [alanhedley@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:alanhedley@ca-north.org.uk).

Copy deadline for the next edition is Tuesday 18th March 2008.

For more information on Community Action check out their website at [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)

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