



# NEWS

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

## LOCAL COUNCILS THE WAY FORWARD

By David Francis

PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS throughout Northumberland are being asked to contribute to a manifesto which will set out their relationship with the new Northumberland Council. The Northumberland Charter for Local Councils was originally compiled in the early 1990s, but it has now been completely re-drafted not only to accommodate the new 'landscape' of local government, but also to increase the opportunities for local initiative, community engagement and improved standards of performance.

The draft Charter has been compiled by David Francis, with contributions from a cross-party group of County Council/Unitary Authority members, officers within the Joint Implementation Team, and the County Committee of NALC – the Northumberland Association of Local Councils. It has drawn heavily on the survey which NALC conducted in Spring 2007, to research the ambitions and the needs of parish and town councils throughout Northumberland. This survey had demonstrated an almost-universal wish by local councils to be consulted over a wide range of issues which impact on the local area, together with an aspiration (mostly from within the larger communities) to take a direct responsibility for running services which hitherto have been run by the county or district councils.

So the Charter includes all local councils (whether called parish, town, village, neighbourhood or county council), the new Northumberland Council, and associated bodies including NALC, CAN and the Northumberland Strategic Partnership. Provision is made for effective consultation, covering not only the subjects on which local councils will be consulted, but also defining what constitutes an acceptable process. The Charter also clarifies the issues on which consultation will take place via community forums. There are various services and functions on which local councils will be expected to take the lead and to fund from their own budgets: examples include play areas, allotments and burial grounds. However, there are additional services which could be devolved by the Northumberland Council to certain local councils, towards which the new Council would make a financial contribution: for example, car parks, road/pavement maintenance and markets. Any such transfer of responsibility will depend on an assessment of a local council's capacity and capability to undertake the work, among other considerations.

They will also be encouraged to 'raise their game', through making effective use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology), through the promotion of the Quality Parish Councils scheme, and through actively engaging with the wider community. Forward planning, co-operating with neighbouring local councils, participating in community forums and working

with the local elected members of the Authority will all be important. The Charter also clarifies the support which local councils can expect, from the new Authority itself, from NALC and from the bodies which provide advice and support to the wide range of voluntary and community sector bodies.

The draft Charter is being circulated during October to all local councils, with

## MORPETH FLOODS

A GREAT DEAL OF MEDIA COVER has been given to the Morpeth floods both nationally and locally. There is scarcely a person residing or working in the area who does not have a personal account to recall, either of their involvement or of a relative or close friend. We at CAN consider ourselves fortunate that our offices at Tower Buildings, Oldgate escaped the waters. Some of our staff were not so fortunate and we all feel for them.

Messages and expressions of sympathy have come in from all parts of the country. It is extremely difficult to respond to these in a few sentences but a statement from Morpeth Town Council does so well, acknowledging support but also asking that people do not overlook the hardship caused in other parts of Northumberland too.

The statement reads:- "Morpeth Town Council has received numerous expressions of sympathy from parishes throughout the country following the recent flood disaster, and it gratefully acknowledges this support.

Whilst it is encouraging to receive such kind words and offers of help and advice, we must not forget that other parts of the County were also badly affected. I refer especially to Mitford, Hepscoth, Wooler, Rothbury and Warkworth, though I am sure there will be many small villages whose plight has not been noticed, but who have also sustained great damage to property and in some cases, livelihood. I would be grateful, therefore, if you could include Morpeth Town Council's concern and sympathy for our other Northumberland parishes and towns in any correspondence you may presently issue.

It is going to be a long road back to normality here, but we must not lose sight of the need to help other communities, and I would appreciate if you will advise the respective councils that Morpeth has them very much in its thoughts at this time."



any responses expected by early December. It is planned that the final version will be adopted by the new Council and by NALC, with individual local councils demonstrating their support through the day-to-day implementation of the provisions within it.

The Charter may be viewed on the website [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)

## CAN's AGM 2008

CAN's AGM will be held at Stocksfield Institute Community Association on the afternoon of Wednesday 5 November 2008. After business has been concluded David Francis, Director will be introducing two DVDs covering the subjects of climate change and renewable energy.

"The Heat is on", sponsored by the NSP, has been filmed in Northumberland. It features well known parts of the county and discusses what effect on tourism, business and our general life style that climate change could have upon those living in the county.

The second DVD "21st Century Village" has been produced by ACRE in conjunction with the RCCs in England. It features a number of sustainable and renewable energy projects including some in Keilder.

The business part of the meeting commences at 2.30 but at 1.00pm there will be, for a small fee, a buffet lunch for those who choose to partake. All who are interested in supporting the work of Community Action are welcome. Invitation letters have been posted to members on our mailing list and a copy is on our website, [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk), in case any interested persons have not received a letter.

## Alan Hedley



THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of CAN will see the end of an era with the retirement of our Assistant Director, Alan Hedley. Alan joined us in 1997 following a career in HM Customs and Excise. He quickly became well-known and appreciated throughout the county for his painstaking work in advising community building projects, interpreting constitutions and other governing documents, interceding with the Charity Commission and with grant-giving bodies, helping new groups to become established and editing Community News. Behind the scenes at CAN, Alan has also led on our 'quality' work, helping us to acquire and retain Investors in People status, and the higher level of the national ACRE Quality Mark. He has organised and overseen the introduction and updating of our ICT systems and our website, and has assisted with a wide range of employment matters, policies and procedures.

In the gamekeeper-turned-poacher style, Alan contributed his detailed understanding of Value Added Tax to the world of community projects and his timely intervention has saved Northumberland's voluntary and community sector from incurring some millions of pounds of otherwise irrecoverable VAT, over the last 11 years. Alan also led in compiling a key CAN briefing paper on this subject, which received the approval of HM Customs and Excise Policy Division, and which is in constant use by VCS advisers throughout the country.

Alan retires in early November. He will be missed by community buildings committees, voluntary organisations, parish councils, funders and the members and staff of CAN. We thank Alan for his enthusiasm and commitment over the last 11 years, and we wish for him a long and active retirement.

# Up To £5,000 Available for Community and Voluntary Sector Groups

IF YOU ARE A NOT-FOR-PROFIT voluntary or community organisation you may be eligible to receive a Grassroots grant of between £250 and £5,000.

Funding is now available for groups who have been in existence for a year or more. They must also have an average income of less than £20,000 a year, work for the benefit of their local community, be led by volunteers and have a written set of rules or constitution.

The Grassroots grants are intended to respond to the diverse needs of community organisations and be very wide ranging including the purchase of equipment, costs for putting on events, community activities, or training and staffing costs,

Grassroots Grants is funded by the Office of the Third Sector and managed by the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland in association with Community Action Northumberland, Blyth Valley CVS and Wansbeck CVS. It is a three year scheme that will run until March 2011.

Grants will not be available for statutory organisations (including parish councils), regional or local offices of a national organisation, parochial church councils, any party political activity, commercial ventures or organisations that are for the sole benefit or relief of animals or plants.

Application forms can be downloaded from the Community Foundation website [www.communityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk)

If you would like some help with your application you can contact

- Julia Plinston, The Centre, Fenkle Street, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1HW. Tel: 01665 605540. E-mail: [juliaplinston@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:juliaplinston@ca-north.org.uk).
- Marc Johnson, Berwick Borough Area Volunteer Centre, 5 Tweed Street, Berwick upon Tweed TD15 1NG. Tel: 01289 304141. E-mail: [marcjohanson@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:marcjohanson@ca-north.org.uk)
- Louise Currie, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1PY. Tel: 01670 517178. E-mail: [louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk)
- Shaun Hogg, Hexham Community Centre, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NP. Tel: 01434 607871. E-mail: [shaunhogg@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:shaunhogg@ca-north.org.uk)
- Jane Hart, Senior Community Development Officer, Community Action Northumberland, Hexham Community Centre, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NP. Tel: 01434 607871. E-mail: [janehart@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:janehart@ca-north.org.uk)
- Blyth Valley Council for Voluntary Service, 22 Beaconsfield Street, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2DP. Tel: 01670 353623. E-mail: [enquiries@blythvalleycvcs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@blythvalleycvcs.org.uk)
- Wansbeck Council for Voluntary Service, 107-109 Station Road, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8RS. Tel: 01670 858688. E-mail: [funding@wansbeckcvcs.org.uk](mailto:funding@wansbeckcvcs.org.uk)

## CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

A LARGER NUMBER of house extensions and loft conversions will now be able to take place without the need to apply for planning permission, as a result of changes to the General Development Order. Previously, only small extensions had been defined as Permitted Development: up to 50 cubic metres for a terraced house and 70 cubic metres for other houses. Since 1 October 2008, these limits have increased, but they are also more complex, being based on factors such as whether the extension is single or two-storey, on the front or on the back of the dwelling, and so on. To help people to understand the new arrangements, there is a new interactive website on [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

Other recent changes to the planning system include new processes and controls over: the hard-surfacing of driveways and parking areas, with an incentive to use permeable surfaces in order to alleviate flooding; tree preservation orders; and the installation of solar panels. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Appendix) (No 2) (England) Order 2008 is a Statutory Instrument, no 2362 for 2008, which can be downloaded from the [opsi.gov.uk](http://opsi.gov.uk) website.

## COUNCIL PAY - little progress

THE NEGOTIATIONS to settle the salary levels of council staff have yet to be concluded, and a request has now been made for ACAS to resolve the question through Arbitration. This means that it is not yet possible to make recommendations on parish clerks' pay for this current year (2008-09). The recommendations, when available, will be back-dated to 1 April 2008.

## £500,000 COMMA Fund for Communities Affected by Quarrying

COMMUNITIES in Northumberland that have been affected by aggregates quarrying have the opportunity to benefit from a share of a £500,000 fund. The COMMA (Community Aggregates) fund is a three year scheme with funding drawn from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.

DEFRA have commissioned Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) to deliver the scheme in partnership with Community Action Northumberland, along with 22 other members of the Rural Community Action Network.

Communities that have been affected by the extraction or transportation of aggregates and are within 10 kilometres of an aggregates site are eligible to apply for a grant of between £3,000 and £20,000 to support community projects. The closing date for this year's round of applications is 7th November 2008 and all projects must be completed by the end of June 2009. Round 2 of the fund is due to open for applications in January 2009 with a final round opening in early 2010.

For more details and an application pack please contact Marc Johnson on 01289 304141 or email: [marcjohanson@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:marcjohanson@ca-north.org.uk)

# ACCESS TO PARISH COUNCIL'S INFORMATION

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 requires a very wide range of public bodies-including parish councils-to make available to the public, on request, a wide range of information which they hold. Parish councils were required in 2002 to adopt a Publication Scheme, which lists the types of written information which is held and which is available to the public with or without a charge. These Publication Schemes have a limited 'life', and all parish councils are required to adopt a new Publication Scheme before the end of December 2008.

To help this process, the Information Commissioner has prepared a new Model Publication Scheme, which it is recommended can be adopted verbatim by each council. This Scheme is accompanied by a Guide to Information which is held by the council: a template is available, which each council can complete, add to, or delete from, according to the specific information which the council holds. The Guide, which

should also contain details of any charges for the supply of this information, should be reviewed periodically, and it should itself be made available to the public. Normally, such charges would only apply to the supply of 'hard copies', as it is expected that information on a website would be available to download free-of-charge.

Even if some classes of information are not listed in the council's Guide to Information, it is possible that the public can still request a copy of that information under the general provision of the Act, for which a different charging regime applies. In addition to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, some councils hold information which is subject to public access under a different piece of legislation: the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Environmental Information includes, for example, information about policies and plans relating to land and landscape. It seems likely that most bodies will find it difficult to distinguish between the FoI Act and the E I Regulations, and so it is advisable for the Publication Scheme to cover all types of available information, unless there is a good and lawful reason for not including it.

The Information Commissioner hopes that Councils will not charge excessive fees for the supply of information through the Publication Scheme. It is legitimate to recover costs such as photocopying and postage/packing, and also any costs arising from the additional staff time required to retrieve and supply the information if this goes beyond the council's normal activities in generally making information available to the public.

Copies of the Model Scheme and of the related guidance are available from the Information Commission's website: [ico.gov.uk](http://ico.gov.uk), or email David Francis at NALC in Morpeth.

## Burial Information Session

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS of the first event held in June CAN has organised a second event for anyone managing a cemetery/burial ground.

Friday 7th November 2008, in Stannington Village Hall

The morning will begin at 9.30 for coffee and a prompt 10.00am start. It is likely the session will finish no later than 2.00pm and a buffet lunch will be provided.

There will be a fee of £5.00 per delegate, to cover some of the costs, which will be payable on booking.

If you are interested in coming along, please contact Louise Currie, Community Initiatives Officer, who will book a place for you. ([louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk) (01670 500816)

The session will cover Woodland Burials and Health and Safety matters, following the suggestions given on the evaluation forms from the last session. There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions.

## THE COST OF WASTE DISPOSAL

By Alan Hedley

THERE IS SOME CONCERN about the inconsistency and misapplication of the 1992 Controlled Waste Regulations as applied to public institutions and charities. The collection, disposal and recycling of waste from community premises is covered by these Regulations, the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The charging system for waste disposal from community buildings varies according to the type of building. There is no collection charge for waste from churches or church halls, nor from parks. A charge may be made by the local authority for collection of waste from charitable village halls and community buildings used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. This is classified as household waste under Regulation 4, Schedule 2. This regulation also covers schools and educational establishments, garden waste and asbestos.

Waste from charities is to be regarded as household waste but the council is entitled to make a charge for the collection only.

Waste from a village hall is commercial waste when the hall is hired out for functions such as weddings, parties, children's groups etc. This means a charge can be made for collection and disposal.

CAN is uncertain at this time what charges are being made to community buildings for the collection of waste. Perhaps some halls are being billed for both the collection and disposal of waste as if it were commercial waste? Then there is the question of separation of waste for landfill and recycling. Are halls being required to do this and if so how do they do it?

There may be issues to address but before we know for certain we need feedback from the halls. CAN hopes to work with the village hall consortia in Northumberland to assess whether there are problems. At this stage halls are invited to contact Louise Currie at CAN with their experiences. Louise can be contacted at [louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk) or by telephone 01670 517178.

# BEST VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRY

By Alan Hedley

THE TITLE OF NORTHUMBERLAND VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2008 has been awarded to Broomley and Stocksfield, a thriving community in the Tynedale area of Northumberland.

In awarding the first prize the judges commented that the entry had been of a high standard that demonstrated a strong sense of community and a pride in the village and its amenities and services. The entry was a joint effort from the parish council and the community association and displayed strong leadership from these bodies with much evidence of cooperation from others.

In this annual competition sponsored nationally by Calor and organised locally by Community Action Northumberland, entrants were required to comment on four aspects of rural community life - people, business, environment and communications. Additionally they were asked to describe, in no more than 500 words, what makes their village a special place.

The judges were impressed by their written entry and their visit to Stocksfield where they were treated to a tour of the parish, a power point presentation, and a question and answer session in which various community groups participated.

This vibrant community, with a population of around 2,500, will receive a prize of £400 as winners. Furthermore they will go forward to represent Northumberland in the national competition covering 2008 - 2009 with judging taking place next year.

This is a special year for the village as the Stocksfield Community Association Institute has been celebrating its 50th anniversary. Following their win Community Action Northumberland asked if they could hold their AGM at the Stocksfield Institute on 5 November, at which the village would be presented with a commemorative winner's plaque. The community spirit and cooperation of groups within the parish was further demonstrated when the Carpet Bowls Club, the regular Wednesday afternoon users of the hall, readily agreed to forgo their booking on that day.



George Scott, one of the judges and vice chairman of Community Action Northumberland, in conversation with Margaret Williams, Clerk to the Parish Council and one of the contacts for this competition.

## NATIONAL VILLAGE HALLS Survey 2008

By Alan Hedley

VERY SOON A QUESTIONNAIRE will be going out to all community buildings in Northumberland in the third National Village Halls survey. Let's clarify one point at the offset, for "village halls" read "any community building that is managed by a voluntary management committee, run for public benefit, and plays host to a range of activities for a range of users". In Northumberland there are around 240 such buildings including, community centres, WI halls, scout huts and church halls as well as the conventional village hall.

In 1988 the first Survey aimed to gain a picture of the nature of provision of village halls in England. Overall the Survey informed and influenced a wide range of initiatives including the 'Red Tape' initiatives of the Cabinet Office and the Department of Trade and Industry. It was the first research of its kind and led to the 1998 survey which aimed to monitor changes that had occurred in the management, administration and use of village halls during the preceding 10 year.

In 1998 the second survey aimed to monitor changes that had occurred in the management, administration and use of village halls during the preceding 10 years. The results of the 1998 Survey provided a snapshot of 3,348 village halls and similar community buildings in rural England. They recorded how rural community buildings are managed, used and funded; the type of buildings, their age and accommodation. The survey also collected data about the problems and opportunities affecting village halls at that time.

And so we come to 2008 and the third survey. This will measure what major changes have taken place in the last ten years and identify any trends over the 20 years covered to date. It will support ACRE's work on a national level in influencing the development of legislation and making a case for change wherever necessary. The information gathered will also help CAN update their records and help them in planning their training events for hall management committees.

8158 survey forms were issued in 1998 with 3348 being completed and returned, a 41% return rate. Completing the form is not a 5 minute job. The level of return in 1998 demonstrates how important management committees nationally considered the survey to be. The importance has not decreased since then and CAN asks the management committees of all community buildings in Northumberland to complete their survey form and thanks them in anticipation.

## CAN Investors in People



COMMUNITY ACTION Northumberland first achieved the Investors in People (IIP) Standard on 6 June 2005. The Standard is time limited in that the organisation needs to be reviewed regularly, the normal time span being every 3 years.



Following a review carried out on 16 July 2008 by Philippa Robinson, an accredited IIP assessor, CAN demonstrated that it was maintaining the standard effectively and was issued with a further certificate of recognition.

The photo was taken at a celebratory event at Longhirst Hall on 18 September where a number of organisations received plaques to recognise their achievement. It shows Sally Johnson, Operation Manager, Assessment North East (left) presenting a plaque to Sue Richardson (Trustee) and Alan Hedley (Assistant Director) in recognition of CAN's achievement of the IIP standard.

## NORTHUMBERLAND COMPACT - in a nutshell

by Lynda Watson

HAVE YOU READ articles about the Compact but never had time to really find out what it was about?

You now have the opportunity to access quick summary sheets which explain the main points, giving you the option to read the unabridged version and more importantly knowing when to.

The Summaries can be found on [www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk)

For further information please contact Lynda Watson, Compact & Contracts Officer. [lyndawatson@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:lyndawatson@ca-north.org.uk) Tel: 01670 500815

## Survey of CAN's Users & Partners

'THANK YOU' to all of our readers who completed and returned our questionnaire recently. This survey asked for your opinions about our services and other activities. We will report further in our next edition. In the meantime we will be using the findings to help prepare our new Business Plan for the next three years.

As promised, we offered £50 for the first person whose name was drawn at random from among the survey's respondents. We are pleased to confirm that the lucky person/group is Adrian Hinchcliffe who has donated the sum, through Bywell Parish Council, to a local project which is to produce a permanent photographic record of the interior of Newton Church before its impending sale.

## HALLMARK 1 Training

CAN recently organised a series of three Hallmark 1 training sessions for community building/village hall management committee members.

The sessions were held in Wooler, Acomb and Stanington and a total of 36 people attended.

The purpose of the sessions was to help management committee members understand what needs to be in place to enter their hall for Hallmark 1.

Any Community Buildings/village halls that wish to apply to enter can now do so. If you want an application form, please contact Louise Currie on 01670 500816 or by e-mail [louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk)

## Goodbyes

WE WERE SAD TO LOSE two valued members of our support staff in October. They are Chris Hall and Sue Hacking, both of whom had been with us since 2002.



Chris, who had been our Office Manager in Morpeth was familiar to those phoning or visiting Tower Buildings, or attending our general meetings. She was a constant thorn-in-the-flesh of all of us who failed to meet our agreed deadlines and her sense of humour was infectious.



Sue had worked for us in a variety of roles, initially linked to the Bellingham Community Development Trust and latterly as an Information Officer based in our Hexham office.

Regrettably, both posts had to be made redundant, due to continuing financial uncertainties. We thank both Chris and Sue for their support and their enthusiasm, and we wish them well for the future.

## Northumberland Compact (Toolkit)

by Lynda Watson

A VCS CONSULTATION CODE of Good practice and Consultation Toolkit was launched in August 2008. The Toolkit is a practical 'how to' guide. This document builds upon the principles contained within the Northumberland Compact. It details best practise for both public sector and voluntary & community sector organisations. It joins the Funding & Procurement Code and Dispute Resolution Codes of good practice produced in 2007.

The Consultation Code of Good Practice can be found on [www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk)

For further information please contact Lynda Watson, Compact & Contracts Officer. [lyndawatson@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:lyndawatson@ca-north.org.uk) Tel: 01670 500815

# A POT OF BLACK STICKY STUFF

(A.K.A. VILLAGE HALL LIFE AFTER A LOTTERY BID) *By John Edwards*

DURING 2007 ELSDON VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE made an application to the National Lottery for a rebuild. In June, while this process was taking place, bitumen (a pot of black sticky stuff) and felt were used on a flat roof to keep the rain out of the toilets for fete day. Then attempts were made throughout the autumn with more tins of bitumen (pots of black sticky stuff) and brushes to try to stop the rain coming through the roof into other parts of the building. At this time it was felt that the building was unusable, but also, that something must be done. Doing nothing was no longer an option. Just as well really, because in December the news arrived that no funds would come from the National Lottery.

In case this happened a Boxing Day walk had been organised to celebrate the beginning of a process to put the existing building back into use. Twenty two of us started at the village hall and took a circular route, ably led by our "Walk Leader in Residence" and finished at the church for mulled wine and mince pies. Since January we have begun to restore Elsdon Village Hall. So far we have:

*put on a new roof*  
*installed cavity wall insulation*  
*begun opening toilets to visitors on a daily basis*  
*repaired the main hall ceiling and decorated*  
*begun to reinstate the kitchen room*  
*been given a new porch and entrance doors*  
*put a gate and ramp into a potential garden area*  
*been given soil for the garden area*  
*have put flower pots outside to make the building more welcoming.*

Local people have also begun to put the building back into use with walks from the hall, meetings, BBQ's, Country and Western Evening, Dancing and an ongoing Art Project organised by a local artist. Also we have begun weekly meetings on Thursday Mornings for people of all ages who are at home through the week and who would like to meet one another to talk, play and take part in activities. On one Thursday Morning local musicians came to play and sing.

As part of this process of re-establishing use a series of working parties was begun to:

*clear out damaged and out of date equipment and fittings*  
*clear and repair drains, gutters and downpipes*  
*tidy the car park and surrounds*  
*clean the building inside and out*  
*clear the potential garden area*  
*decorate inside and out*

These activities enabled us to meet for a purpose, work together, cooperate, create a sense of doing something useful and worthwhile to hopefully benefit as many people as possible and in some cases to get to know one another and make friends--- in other words "community in action." As such, we began to realise that the project was far more reaching than attempting to restore a building. A sense of collective ownership was growing, highlighted by the giving and lending of materials, tools and equipment, time and numerous offers of help.

These activities have been continuously helped and guided by the building inspector,

fire officer, electrician, people with other skills and Northumberland National Park. Thanks also to Alnwick District Council, Community Action Northumberland, Elsdon Parish Council, the Local Councillor and M.P. for help and support, especially with re-roofing and opening the toilets on a daily basis.

---And Most Recently??--- Well, twenty Artistes from Durham, Northumberland and the Borders of Scotland organised a Northumbrian Evening. They came to enthral a large audience for several hours and raise funds to help with refurbishment. While this was going on and we were watching the clog dancer, it came to mind, "---and who would have thought of what a pot of black sticky stuff would lead to!"

So what might happen next? Well, that's for you to guess and us to wonder about! But, "Watch This Space."

A whole-hearted THANK YOU to all those who help, support and join in.

## CAN Website

CAN's website, [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk), contains information on the organisation and the work it does for communities in Northumberland.

Visitors to the site can discover some useful sources of information including our Vision statement in the About Us section; back copies of CAN News and information sheets in the Library section; information to help village hall committees in the Services section and numerous other snippets on the site.

The information sheets on fundraising remain popular and these have recently been reviewed. The September 2008 versions can be located at Library > Information Sheets.

## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

*By Sue Andrew*

ONLY DAYS AFTER THE FLOODS which devastated Morpeth homes and businesses had receded, the town was host to one section of the Round Britain bike race. Had the event been held on the 6th instead of the 12th of September, the mode of transport would have had to be vastly different, since Bridge Street was under 2 feet of water but by Friday sandbags by the doorways on Bridge Street had all but disappeared, to be replaced by crowds of onlookers, waiting to see the cyclists on their road south.

Shortly after 1pm police motorcycles heralded their imminent arrival and within minutes the colourful band had left the town centre behind with the crowds lingering to perhaps catch a glimpse of Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall who visited the town later in the afternoon to meet locals and to see the aftermath of the worst floods to hit the town since records began. HRH The Queen also sent a message of support saying that her thoughts were with the communities affected. With at least 400 residents evacuated from their homes and 1000 properties affected, the clean-up operation has only just begun and will be a long time in being complete.



## WHERE CAN WE GO?

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS throughout Northumberland can now get all the public events they are involved in listed on the Daily Telegraph's events service and on the UK's family & community what's on diary [www.WhereCanWeGo.com](http://www.WhereCanWeGo.com) - entirely free of charge.

It is a way of getting details about fetes, sales, concerts, community campaigns etc etc out to a new audience locally - and to those interested from wider afield.

By way of background, WhereCanWeGo.com is a national service focussed on family and community events. It has exceeded all expectations - over 100,000 events posted across the country in the first two and a half years. Up to 15,000 people use the site every day for ideas of what to do.

Said founder Kimble Earl: "We launched the service because we found it time-consuming to trawl endless websites to find out things to do with my own family, and because attendance at some really worthwhile events seemed disappointing. Judging by feedback we get from users and organisers, [www.WhereCanWeGo.com](http://www.WhereCanWeGo.com) is helping solve both problems! It is getting enthusiastic response from people who can search for events by category, by date, by region, and find it a useful one-stop shop for such information."

WhereCanWeGo.com has stuck to its original concept of publicising family and community events, steering clear of cinema, gig, or adults-only information. It has the flavour of a village notice board on a national scale.

Since the site has become better known, it is clear that searchers not only use the service for their free time at home, but also in planning their holidays and weekends away. Said Kimble: "Plenty of people holidaying in Northumberland will want to know what's on - some ideas are on local and regional tourism websites, but we are hearing so often that the public like to have a good selection of events displayed on a national website they already know and use at home, and that's where we come in".

Organisers can post events entirely free of charge, or link to their own website for a nominal sum. There is also a commission-free, fee-free ticketing service available. All events with a full venue postcode are also listed on the Daily Telegraph's award-winning website - recently audited as the most popular national newspaper site.

And members of the public can even register to get an early email alert of events likely to interest them - free, just like the regular on-line search.

## WHAT WE DO

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

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

Additionally CAN seeks to

- work in partnership to facilitate the development of new, and to support existing networks of, local voluntary and community groups, in order to enable them to be a mechanism for developing collaborative work across the sector.
- influence and work with decision-makers to provide, with partners, conduits for the diverse views of the local voluntary and community sector to be voiced and heard within the decision making structures, regionally and nationally.

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

CAN News is published 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 [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)

Copy deadline for the next issue is Tuesday 18 November 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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