

A GOOD TURNOUT FOR THE AGM

101 MEMBERS AND FRIENDS plus 27 members of staff attended CCN's Annual General Meeting at Stannington Village Hall on the afternoon of Monday 24 March 2003. The meeting was to receive the report and accounts for the year end 2002 and to elect such Honorary Officers, Auditors of the Council, members of the Executive Committee and of such other committees as required for the ensuing year. As is customary, after the business of the meeting was carried out there was to be a guest speaker.

His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, President of the Community Council, welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Sally Black (Chairman), Ian Brown (Guest Speaker) and Jeff Hughes (representing Honorary Treasurer) to the assembled guests.

CCN normally holds its AGM in the Autumn of the year in which the meeting reports on. In her presentation of the Annual Report for 2002 the Chairman mentioned that this was the first full Council meeting since the October 2001 meeting and explained that the delay was due to pressure of work within the finance section. The theme throughout the report was one of community support.

In her overview of the year Sally covered;

- the effect of Foot and Mouth Disease and the involvement of CCN staff and in particular the Rural Stress Initiative, not only during the period but also during the post FMD initiatives.

- The implementation of the Rural White Paper, and particularly the Vital Villages grant schemes were an important part of the year.
- Staff were heavily occupied in the European Funding Objective 2 programme working on the formation of 8 locally based community panels and the formation of the Rural Northumberland Package.
- The introduction of new LEADER+ programmes for North Northumberland and for Tynedale/North Pennines.
- The impact on parish councils of the Government's Local Government Modernising Programme.



Sally Black MBE, retiring Chairman of CCN, with Ian Brown, guest speaker, David Francis, Director and His Grace the Duke of Northumberland

Finally, the Chairman announced that this would be her final AGM, having served an extra six months in her term of office. She highlighted the support given by the various agencies, members of the Executive Committee and F & GP Committee, the Vice Presidents, and the President, the Duke of Northumberland, whose knowledge of the whole area was very much appreciated. The Chairman ended her report by thanking Dr Francis

for his support over her four-year term, and wished her successor well.

Jeff Hughes, Executive Committee member and representing the Honorary Treasurer, presented the Annual Accounts.

After the completion of official business, including election of Executive Committee members, His Grace the Duke of Northumberland gave a vote of thanks for our Chairman Sally Black MBE. He praised her hard and dedicated service over her term of office as Chairman and was pleased that she would be staying on in her capacity as a Vice President. The Duke, as President, presented Sally with flowers and a gift. All present showed their appreciation. The President then introduced Ian Brown, North East Region Business in the Community, who spoke on the theme "Enterprising Communities". Ian Brown began by looking at some of the issues which were relevant to the work of the Community Council of Northumberland. Despite thousands of successful community projects, Northumberland was still failing to release enterprise at the required rate. Ian commented upon the fact that there existed a gap between what communities wanted and what some agencies seemed to deliver. There was a need for enterprise in key settlements, as well as a need to address ignorance between rural and urban society. Entrepreneurs could act as mentors or advisors for businesses within rural areas. Big Businesses could also increase their involvement with rural areas, and Ian gave Barclays Bank plc as an example of this. There needed to be more communication between organisations and agencies in relation to rural issues. Ian explained that there was a genuine rural/urban inter-dependence about these issues. There was a need for Integrity, inspiration, integration, impact and innovation. Ian stated that 40% of business leaders got new business ideas through community activities, 74% of the British public believed that industry and commerce did not pay enough attention to the local communities in which they operated and Partnership with business has had the most impact on community organisations' facilities, widening the network and raising profiles. A new kind of 'revenue' was felt to be required. The important assets within the community were the people themselves. Ian questioned whether communities actually gave residents the environment they really wanted to live in. question and answer session followed with the Speaker taking numerous questions from the floor. Cllr David Woodard gave the vote of thanks to Ian for his address, which had been warmly received. (Due to the lateness of the AGM there will be no Spring Meeting in 2003 with the next full Council meeting being in the autumn of 2003).



Members and guests cast their eyes over the Annual Report prior to the meeting

Supporting Quality in Parish Councils

PARISH COUNCILS throughout Northumberland and Newcastle are set to develop their skills and their role, as a result of new training and 'quality' opportunities. The activities in our area are being organised by NALC - the Northumberland Association of Local Councils - with help from the Community Council, local authorities and some funding from the Countryside Agency.

The new opportunities are a development of NALC's long-established system of providing advice, information and training. The first events have already been organised for April. They include training on the new Accounts and Audit system, an event for newly appointed parish clerks (and some who are not so new!) and a seminar on the law and procedures surrounding the new provisions for village access over village greens and commons.

To fit in with the 1 May 2003 parish elections, these will be followed by events for new councillors and new chairmen over the summer. Later in the year, there will be events on specific topics, such as Town and Country Planning, Cemeteries and Parish Plans.

We will also be putting into place support for two key nationwide initiatives. The first of these is to help clerks to gain accreditation as 'competent clerks'. There will continue to be support for those who wish to gain a Higher Education Certificate in Local Policy, which has been available to clerks and councillors in our area for the last 10 years, as a result of a link with the University of Gloucestershire (formerly called the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education). A new opportunity is now being developed to enable a clerk's expertise to be accredited by the AQA (the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance). NALC will support participants to compile a portfolio of evidence based on their own material, such as minutes of meetings, budgets and short essays.

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A DAY OUT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

THERE WILL BE something for ALL the family at Northumberland Federation of Women's Institutes Annual County Day to be held at Newbiggin Middle School - Newbiggin on:

SATURDAY MAY 31st 2003

from 10am - 4pm Overall Theme:

"For Home and Country"

Visitors will be able to see a wide range of competition entries e.g. art, floral art, cookery, crafts, photography etc. Demonstration throughout the day of various crafts, stick dressing etc. Home-made refreshments, cake, book, plant stalls etc., plus local youth band.

(Continued from previous page)

Where a parish council clerk holds one of these qualifications, the parish council itself may then apply for accreditation: as a Quality Parish Council. This new opportunity was announced by the Government in March, and is due to become active during the summer. To be designated as a Quality Parish Council, a number of tests will need to be met. These cover, for example, communications with the wider community, the standard of accounting and of annual reports, and an 'electoral mandate' test. NALC will be responsible not only for supporting clerks through the process, but also for organising a small board/committee to carry out the assessment.

The Government will publish the final details of the scheme in May, together with guidance on the new powers and responsibilities which Quality Parish Councils may wish to take on, from the principal authorities. We will circulate details when they become available.

Both the accreditation of clerks' competence and the designation of Quality Parish Councils, are initiatives which have been developed jointly by the Government and the National Association of Local Councils, among other bodies. A certain amount of finance has been given by the Countryside Agency, to develop new training materials, establish new structures and provide an initial subsidy. However, it is anticipated that local training and accreditation work will need to become financially self-sufficient within a few years.

Locally, our policy is to offer support and an opportunity for accreditation, for those who want it. Training will be available whether or not it leads to accreditation. Member councils wishing to have a copy of the Portfolio Guide and Assessment Criteria for clerks' competency (i.e. the AQA qualification) should contact NALC at Tower Buildings, Morpeth.

Community Fund Advice Surgeries

A SERIES of Advice Surgeries for potential applicants to the Community Fund has been organised by the Fund. Attendees will be able to discuss proposals and get further information on the Community Fund's programmes. All the surgeries will take place at their offices at Baron House, Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, (directly opposite the central railway station).

All sessions must be booked in advance. Contact Yvonne Gardiner or Marian Drummond at the Community Fund on 0191 255 1100.

Current dates for surgeries are:

- Tuesday 29 April
- Tuesday 27 May
- Tuesday 24 June
- Tuesday 29 July
- Tuesday 2 September
- Tuesday 23 September
- Tuesday 28 October
- Tuesday 25 November
- Tuesday 16 December

MORE FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Community Foundation has got 60% more Government money to give away as grants this year to community groups across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, which are helping to build stronger communities. For an application pack, including guidelines, please call them on 0191 2220945, email: [general@communityfoundation.org.uk] or look at www.communityfoundation.org.uk

Small Grants Fund

The Partnership also have available a Small Grants Fund which can be used to help small, usually community-led rural transport projects. See their website for more details and an application form, or contact them and they will be pleased to discuss your scheme or post you a form.

North East Guide to Grants for Voluntary Organisations - CD Version

THE POPULAR North East Guide to Grants for Voluntary Organisations published by Funding Information North East is now available in a CD format.

The CD is easy to use, particularly by those who are visually impaired. Bookmarks and Links rather than a search function help the user find the information they require.

The CD will run on operating systems, Windows 95 and above. It is not suitable for use on Apple Mac computers.

Copies of the CD cost £35 and are available from Funding Information North East, John Haswell House, 8/9 Gladstone Terrace, Gateshead, NE8 4DY. Tel: 0191 477 1253 or email: enquiries@fine.org.uk

The North East Guide to Grants for Voluntary Organisations contains information on over 100 charitable trusts which support voluntary organisations and community groups in Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and Teesside. Most of the information is provided by the charitable trusts themselves and lists their grant making policies, procedures and recent grants awarded. There is also a useful section on how to successfully raise money from charitable trusts.

The Guide is also available in book form, costing £12.00 plus £1.50 postage and packing.

VIDEO SERIES HELPS THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMMUNICATE

A NEW SERIES of Voluntary Matters, the training programme designed specifically to help people working in the charity and voluntary sector, is now available to buy.

Voluntary Matters 4 focuses on communications skills, media relations and fundraising.

Each of the four programmes in the VM4 series, produced by the Media Trust, follows someone from a voluntary organisation through intensive training, as they try to solve a major communications challenge in just a few weeks.

The Press follows an HIV charity worker as she races to learn how to write a press release to get her organisation into the papers. The Interview observes a drugs worker as she tries to overcome her fears and handle media interviews successfully. The Event follows a cricket team for the visually impaired as they struggle to stage a fundraising event, while The Pitch watches an educational charity try to persuade companies to fund its work.

VM4 premiered on BBC2's Learning Zone in early April, and is now available to buy on video as a training resource for voluntary sector organisations.

For more information and to buy the Voluntary Matters 4 video, visit www.voluntarymatters4.org or phone 020 7874 7629.

UnLtd Millennium Awards

UnLtd support people who want to make a positive change in their communities. In 2002 they were awarded the Millennium Commission's £100 million Legacy Endowment Fund to set up and run the UnLtd Millennium Awards Scheme. They are looking for social entrepreneurs, individuals who are interested in their community or society (social) and who can make things happen (entrepreneurs). Do you fit that description, are over 16 and have an idea that needs between £500 to £15,000 to turn into an actual project? For more information visit www.unltd.org.uk or ring Nickala Torkington on 01274 728 525.

COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME - Coming Very Soon

NEW FINANCIAL HELP for small community projects will be available in May, as part of the European Objective 2 programme in Northumberland. A £1million fund has been set up, bringing together European structural funds with One North East Single Programme money. Grants of between £200 and £25000 will be available to community groups in the Objective 2 target communities, for projects which help to address the economic needs of the local area.

Typical activities might include training, ICT provision, local marketing initiative schemes which attract visitors to the area, environmental improvements which help to give local people useful work experience, community-run enterprises, refurbishment of village halls/community centres, and so on.

Unlike many other grants schemes, which are run by somewhat remote bodies, this scheme is being run at a very local level by panels and committees composed of people from local community groups. Similar experience during the 1990's demonstrated how very effective it can be to give local communities the power and responsibility for deploying funds.

WHAT IS GETABOUT RTP?

GETABOUT Rural Transport Partnership is a group of people and organisations whose aim is to improve access to employment, education, health, leisure and opportunities in general, for rural residents. The Partnership also seeks to improve access to rural areas for the benefit of all.

Their area covers all of Castle Morpeth, Blyth Valley and Wansbeck Councils, together with the Amble/Shilbottle area of Alnwick Council and they focus particularly on those without access to private cars, or who face other difficulties in accessing services.

They seek to achieve their aim by accessing funding from the Countryside Agency, local Councils, Local Transport Plans, the Lottery, the European Union and other funding sources, to research, design and deliver transport-related projects in rural areas.

Projects included in their Action Plan, published in June 2002, are:

- improving Community Transport - piloting a tourist Coastbus - establishing Wheels to Work schemes - improving access to Wansbeck Hospital and local GP surgeries - distributing localised public transport information leaflets - establishing demand-responsive transport services - surveying and promoting local leisure footpath networks and recreational zones - installing and improving infrastructure at transport interchanges (cycle lockers, bus stops etc) - improving access to education and after-school activities

Steering Group partners currently include representatives from the Community Council of Northumberland, Northumberland Care Trust, Job Centre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, ENRGI, all local Councils, voluntary sector organisations, etc.

For further rural transport information, contact:

Ruth Hughes
Getabout Rural Transport
Partnership Officer
UNIUN Depot, Pegswood
Northumberland, NE61 6RG.
Tel: 01670 513 699
Email: getabout@btconnect.com
www.getabout.org.uk

The fund will run for several years. It is the product of effort from a number of bodies in the area: not only One NE and Europe, but also those who are helping to administer it: community volunteers, local authorities (notably Northumberland, Blyth Valley and Wansbeck). The Northumberland Strategic Partnership, the Government Office for the North East and the Community Council.

For more details, contact the office responsible for the fund in the relevant locality:

Blyth Valley area: Ian Humphreys, Blyth Valley District Council, Civic Centre, Blyth NE24 2BX tel 01670 542082 Wansbeck area: Lynda Watson, Wansbeck District Council, Town Hall, Ashington NE63 8RX tel 01670 843497 Rural Northumberland: General queries: David Francis, Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth NE61 1PY tel 01670 517178 Local Projects: Berwick Borough area: Els Nicol, The Cheviot Centre, 12 Padgepool Place, Wooler NE71 6BL tel 01668 281188 Alnwick District area: Ken Walters, Community Room, Rothbury Library, Front Street, Rothbury NE65 7TZ tel 01669 621770 Coalfield Villages area: Bill Carr, ATAC, Widdrington Station, Morpeth NE61 5QL tel 01670 791773 fax 01670 791774 Eastern Tynedale area: Richard Powell, Hexham Community Centre, Gilesgate, Hexham NE46 3NH tel 01434 607871 fax 01434 606540 Western Tynedale area: Richard Sim, Westbourne House, Main Street, Haltwhistle NE49 9AD tel 01434 322766 Also do not forget that this fund is just for the smaller projects. For much larger projects, grants of hundreds of thousands of pounds each will continue to be available under the main Objective 2 programme in the North East, until December 2006. 428 words

LLOYDS TSB FOUNDATION

Lloyds TSB Foundation has announced £24 million income to donate to charities in 2003 with £1,267,718 allocated to the North East. The main objectives of the North East Regional Plan for 2003 are:

- To target rural areas affected by foot and Mouth Disease, rural isolation and poor transport.
- To support work addressing concerns and issues around substance misuse.
- To address areas with high levels of social need.
- To harness older people's skills in the early years of their retirement and to support them to live independently as they get older.
- To work with projects helping refugees and asylum seekers integrate into their new environment in the North East.

Check out www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk or contact Peter Ellis, Regional Manager or Maria Hallett, Administration Assistant on 0191 261 8433 (Fax 0191 244 6235).

GOODBYE / HELLO

ITS GOODBYE to Maureen Oldham who, after nearly 19 years service, retired on 31 March from the 2 posts of Clerk to the parish councils of Warden and Newbrough. Both councils made presentations to her and Maureen was delighted to receive some wonderful presents. It is though unlikely that her retirement from the parish council duties will mean a complete withdrawal of her involvement with the local communities.

And its hello Robert Macfarlane the new clerk to the two parish councils. He can be contacted at 2 New Houses, Chollerford, Hexham NE46 4ER, Tel. 01434 689423.

Changes at the Coalition

NORTHUMBRIA COALITION AGAINST CRIME (NCAC) launched a whole new range of activities in March 2003.

Their work falls into two complementary areas - Youth Programmes and the North East Retail Crime Partnership. They offer programmes across the region, working in partnership with community groups, voluntary and statutory organisations, and local businesses. They are developing some exciting new ideas, which have been driven by users of their services.

The Coalition's Youth Programmes include the Odysseus Mentoring Project, the Skills Identification and Learning programme, the Attitude to Rules project and Numeracy and Literacy training.

The Odysseus Mentoring Project 'opens eyes by listening' and pairs up a young person with a mentor in their locality for a relationship which challenges, supports and educates the young person and enables them to make choices and decisions relevant to their own lives. By request, NCAC are expanding Odysseus to include the members of the family unit who also want to access this service.

The Skills Identification and Learning Programme works with young leaders in their local community. SKIL provides a four-stepped programme of learning that builds upon skills already learned, and those the young person wants to develop. Where it differs from most programmes is that the SKIL supporter goes into the person's work place or voluntary placement, and offers one-to-one support. The young people concerned move from four week taster courses through to Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. The latter includes a two week work exchange programme overseas. Many participants find they have the confidence to go onto employment, college or university, once they have finished a SKIL course."

The Coalition offer Numeracy and Literacy Training which is tailored to fit into both of the above programmes.

The Attitude to Rules Programme is aimed at school children in years 7, 8 and 9. It enables groups of youngsters to examine their attitudes to making and breaking rules, and particularly looks at peer pressure to commit crime, particularly shop theft.

The second strand to the Coalition's work, the North East Retail Crime Partnership (NERCP), was formed in 1999, and now comprises 300 stores across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Cleveland. It deters professional, prolific, persistent shop thieves by intelligence led targeting across three police force areas.

The Youth Programme and NERCP have combined forces to deliver the Retail Victim Initiative, by working with young offenders and retail staff, to get across the message that shop theft is not a victimless crime.

New developments in the Coalition mean



Anne Tate talking about the work of the Northumbria Coalition Against Crime

FROM THESE PAGES IN

1984

Pensioners In The Nick Newbiggin Senior Citizens' are soon to have their own Social Centre down at the Nick. Age Concern will move into Newbiggin Police Station and share the facilities with the beat policeman. 1988 Liquid Assets With the completion of Kielder Water several years ago, who would have thought that the water supply in the area would ever come into question again? Yet that is what is happening in Kielder Village, where the parish council are concerned about the longer-term management of their water supply.

The water supply is fed from a local spring, and conveyed via Forestry Commission pipework to Kielder's houses, school, social club and other consumers. The village is proud of its local water, and people do not wish to see their supply taken over by an outside agency (Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company), who would almost certainly replace the local spring water with treated water from elsewhere.

1993

THREAT TO RURAL RAILWAYS
The recently-published Railways Bill paves the way for the privatisation of British Rail. It is a complex set of proposals and at a recent meeting of the Community Council it was decided to draw local people's attention to its provisions, and to voice concerns to MPs and members of the House of Lords.

1998

COMMISSIONS TO MERGE A
new rural agency is to be created, which will further the economic and social interests of rural people, and promote the countryside and people's enjoyment of it. The agency - which has yet to be named - is the product of merging the RDC (Rural Development Commission) with CoCo (the Countryside Commission).

the introduction of three satellite offices in the region, in North Northumberland, the East End of Sunderland and the West End of Newcastle, to make delivery of programmes more effective.

Anne Tate, the new Chief Executive, is talking to community and voluntary groups who are interested in hearing more about the Coalition's work. If you would like a talk or presentation, or would even like to become a volunteer, please call Lesley Hughes, the Administrative Manager, on 01661 868424, for further details.

SEWING THE SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE OF ALLENDALE



Sally Black MBE, Chairman of CCN plants the first tree

THE FAWSIDE FOUNDATION, the community development organisation for the Allendales has been awarded £9,360 from the Community Spirit Fund, held at the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. This is the final and largest grant awarded from the Community Spirit Fund, set up to help alleviate the effects of Foot & Mouth Disease in Northumberland. It has ensured the Fawside Foundation can continue its vital work following a very difficult year where Foot and Mouth Disease and the sudden tragic death of Zane Foster, their project manager left its future uncertain.

To celebrate the grant, Sally Black MBE, Board Member at the Community Foundation and Chairman of the Community Council of Northumberland planted the first tree in the new Allendale Tree Nursery that sits between Allendale First and Middle Schools. The tree nursery is one of the many environmental projects that the Fawside Foundation becomes involved with and has become a reality as a result of a partnership between the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Millennium Volunteers and the Fawside Foundation.

The idea is that seeds and saplings from the Allendales will be collected by local children and volunteers and planted in the nursery to nurture and grow. When the trees are strong enough, they will be replanted in the local area.

To witness the planting of the first tree and to help with the planting of another three oak saplings from the area were pupils from Allendale First School.

Andrew Pinnington from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers said: "The replanting of trees represents a new future for the Fawside Foundation and the whole community of Allendale. We are delighted and relieved that this grant has been awarded to the Foundation and we look forward to working more closely with the Fawside Foundation in the future."

Anne Grieves, the Finance Officer of the Fawside Foundation who has been acting Project Manager since the death of Zane, said: "Following a very difficulty and emotional time for us, this grant allows us to start 2003 with new hope as we work alongside the community of the Allendales to ensure regeneration for the area."

Visiting the Fawside Foundation for the first time, Sally Black MBE, a panel member of the Community Spirit Fund was able to see first hand the impact the Fawside Foundation has on the local rural community. She commented: "I am delighted to be here and see the contribution the Community Spirit Fund has made to a community in such a practical way. As the last and largest grant awarded, I am pleased to say that the fund has served its purpose well, supporting the rural communities to rebuild their lives after the devastation of Foot & Mouth Disease. This is the Fund's legacy for the future of the Allendales."

RESTORING LOCAL HEDGEROWS

HALTWHISTLE AND DISTRICT History Society has ambitious plans for restoring the area's ancient hedgerows. Members are concerned that local hedgerows have often fallen into neglect in recent decades as the related traditional rural skills have declined. Too many of these landmarks have lost their character, become thickly grown with other plants or even turned into litter traps.

Now the Society is asking its members and the wider public to identify ancient and more modern hedgerows in the town and its neighbourhood which are in need of restoration. Ideally, it would be helpful if the public would identify not only the hedgerows in need of work but also ascertain whether or not they were originally cut and laid according to Northumbrian or Cumbrian practices. The Haltwhistle locality practised both styles of hedge laying.

The rural craft of hedge laying has largely died out in the district but the Society, working in conjunction with the Haltwhistle Partnership, is hoping to revive these lost skills. Gill Eastlake, the Partnership's Training Officer has already contacted prospective trainers from Marra Training and Kirkley Hall with a view to re-skilling a core of volunteers. Courses in hedge laying will be organised once the appropriate hedges have been identified, landowners' permission granted and volunteers have come forward.

Anyone wishing to suggest suitable hedgerows for work should either drop their suggestions into the Partnership offices on the Main Street or ring Richard Sim of the Historical Society on 01434 322766. People interested in learning the relevant nature conservation skills should contact Claire Heaviside of Tynedale Voluntary Action on 01434 321533.

ARE YOU READY FOR OCTOBER 2004?

(The following quick guide to the forthcoming provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), (DDA) have been prepared for NCN readers by Niall McMurtry, Access and Equality Adviser, Disability North.)

If you are involved in any way with the provision of services to the public, or responsible for managing premises from where services are provided, you need to know about the DDA. Community groups, voluntary organisations, churches, village halls, and so on, will come under the definition of a "service provider" under the Act.

Part III of the DDA is the section that deals with disabled peoples' rights of access to goods, facilities, services and premises. Some provisions are already in force under Part III. In brief they state that: -

1. From 2nd December 1996 it has been unlawful to refuse to serve a disabled person, provide a service in a worse manner or to a lower standard, and to provide a service on less favourable terms, all for a reason relating to a person's disability. These provisions do not require any adjustments to be made for disabled people; rather, they deal with the notion of "less favourable treatment" that can not be justified.

2. Since 1st October 1999, service providers have been required to: -

2.1 Alter their policies, procedures and practices where they have the effect of discriminating against disabled people. For example, a "no dogs" policy must be amended to allow entry to people with guide, hearing or assistance dogs.

2.2 Make reasonable adjustments in the form of auxiliary aids and services. Auxiliary aids include information in different formats, portable ramps, or portable induction loop systems etc. An auxiliary aid is a piece of equipment, or device, which is not part of the fabric of the building. Auxiliary services may include provision of a BSL / English interpreter, or help given by a member of staff to complete a form for a disabled person.

2.3 Where physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access a service, reasonable steps need to be taken of finding another way of providing the service. This could include moving meetings from an upstairs room which lacks lift access to a room on the ground floor, or perhaps even in another building. The purpose of this provision is to make sure that where options are available for moving the location of a service, an adjustment is made for disabled people where they might otherwise be excluded or put at a substantial disadvantage.

What about changes that may be needed to buildings themselves?

From 1st October 2004, disabled people will have the right to make a complaint under the Act, if they feel that the physical nature of premises is making it impossible or unreasonably difficult for them to access a service. Note that "premises" includes buildings but also outside space. A service could be a country park, gardens, picnic area etc.

Service providers therefore have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that the physical nature of their premises does not discriminate against disabled people. Between now and October 2004, service providers should go through a process of identifying both barriers within their premises and practical options for overcoming them. Four choices are open to service providers: -

1. To remove the physical feature altogether,

2. To alter it, so that it no longer has the effect of creating a barrier (e.g. widening a narrow door),

3. Find some way of avoiding the physical

feature (e.g. avoiding a stepped main entrance by giving public access to a secondary entrance that comes off the level), or,

4. Finding some alternative means of making the service available (e.g. holding a monthly meeting in an accessible venue, visiting someone at home, etc).

Points to remember

1. Part III of the DDA is about access to services, it is not directly looking at the built environment. However, it is of course unavoidable that the way our buildings and outside space have been designed will impact upon disabled people's ability to access services.

2. The October 2004 date is not, as such a deadline for alterations to be made to buildings: it is the date from when disabled people can raise a complaint under the Act and, should they feel strongly enough, to take a service provider to court. However, remember that service providers will need to be able to demonstrate that they have been acting reasonably and that they have been proactive about doing the best they can with the resources available to them.

3. The Act does not mean that buildings which are difficult, or impossible to alter, will need to close. If it is not practical to do something or make a service, or part of a service accessible, organisations are not expected to completely remove that service altogether.

4. Service providers are only expected to take "reasonable steps". The Code of Practice to Part III of the Act deals with the notion of "reasonableness". Questions to ask yourself include: -

* How effective would the step be in providing access to disabled people?

* How practical would it be to take the step? If, for example, the existing structure of a building simply prevents something from being done, then this is clearly going to be a reasonable justification for why a barrier still exists. Again, listed building status may impact upon the type of alterations that can be made, although this matter should not act as a bar to going through a thorough process of investigation.

* What financial resources do we have?

* What grant aid might be available?

5. Disabled people are part of local communities and want to have the same opportunity to participate as anyone else. Many aspects of accessibility help everyone. An accessible building and service is a better building and service. We are all getting older too. Those steps you can manage now may be giving you problems in the future!

How can Disability North help?

With support from the Community Fund we can give a free service to voluntary organisations. This includes access audits of existing buildings, input into new build or refurbishment schemes and training in disability / access issues and the DDA. We would be happy to help your organisation address its duties under the Act. Remember, we are a very busy office, so if you are planning a funding proposal for example, please contact us in good time. You can reach us at: -

Disability North Direct Disability North

Castle Farm Road

Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1PH

Tel: 0191 284 2924

Fax: 0191 213 0910

E-mail: direct@disabilitynorth.org.uk

NEW STAFF

NEW STAFF CCN WELCOME 3 NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF



Dawn Brodie-Clarke

Dawn Brodie-Clarke has joined the Leader team to provide administrative support to the project. Dawn is married with 2 girls, both at the Duchess's Community High School, Alnwick. When she is not working and looking after the family she enjoys interior design, cooking and travelling. Currently much of her free time is spent renovating a larger house to which her family will move when the work is completed. Dawn is enjoying the challenge of a busy office.



Gillian Wheeler

Gillian Wheeler joined the organisation as Part-Time Rural Housing Officer on 10th March following Monica Burn's decision to scale down her commitment from full-time to part-time. Gillian, who lives in Thropton with her husband, joins us from Newcastle University where she was Head of Accommodation with responsibility for housing some 5000 students in a mixture of halls of residence and the private rented sector. Previously Gillian was Operations Manager with the YHA for North East England. In her spare time she is a regular belleringer in Morpeth and Rothbury and she also enjoys fell walking.



Mervyn Anthony

Mervyn Anthony has joined the organisation as project manager for REALL (Renewable Energy at Local Level). Mervyn comes to the project with an Electrical Engineering and Ecology background, having previously worked within the private sector, but has also been involved as a volunteer within the voluntary sector as a trustee/chair of several organisations. His working background derives from spending some of his early working years in Research and Development as well as product testing to various standards. He then moved into technical sales where he spent many happy and productive years working for several companies such as 3M UK PLC and Courtauld's Aerospace where he promoted the use of electrical insulation products and cable jointing and terminating systems for use up to 15,000 volts. This has included responsibility for managing various projects. Working for companies of this nature ensured a broad background of training and project management, which he is confident will prove invaluable in his new post.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Northumberland Community News is produced by the Community Council of Northumberland. The first edition came out in October 1981 and it has appeared every two months since then. The newsletter should be of interest to anyone who is working to benefit their local community. We use it to circulate useful information on sources of advice and money, to alert people to changes in legislation or service provision which may affect them, and to pass on ideas and news from one community to another. There are regular items on Parish Council affairs, community halls, and funding as well as other items of informative and newsworthy value; but our hope is that most people read the whole paper as a means of keeping in touch with voluntary activity and the rural parts of the county.

Northumberland Community News is distributed free to Parish and District Councils, the County Council, village hall and Age Concern committees, the rural clergy and many voluntary organisations. Copies are also available in public libraries. If you belong to one of the groups mentioned and do not see the newsletter, find out why not. If you would like more copies contact the Community Council.

Contributions and ideas are welcomed. Please get in touch with the Editor, at Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth NE61 1PY For information on the Community Council check out their website at www.ccn.org.uk

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