

GOING FOR GOLD

A GRANT AID SCHEME which is run by, as well as for, local communities, and which can fund all or most of what a project needs. This is the concept behind the GOLD fund. GOLD (Grant Opportunities for Local Development) brings together money from the European Objective 2 programme and from the One NorthEast Single Programme, to support a wide variety of local projects which contribute to the local economy.

We have given some advanced publicity to this delegated fund in previous editions of Northumberland Community News, but now it is up and running.

It was launched in October, and £1 million is available over the next few years. GOLD is a network of 10 sub-funds, each covering a cluster of wards or parishes, but co-ordinated across the county by the Community Council, Northumberland Strategic Partnership and County Council. Grants are available for activities which benefit the communities which are identified as targets within the Objective 2 programme. Most grants will be in the range of £1000 to £25000, although a limited number of smaller grants will also be possible, for small rural communities. The sorts of eligible activities include:

- confidence-building, vocational training and guidance
- improvements to community centres and village halls, to accommodate training, childcare or other 'economic' activities
- initiatives which help to attract or retain visitors, who spend money in the locality
- the involvement of local people in environmental improvement work or community safety work
- initiatives to retain key local services, such as shops, garages and bus services
- certain community-run enterprises.

For further details, and to find out whether your proposals might be eligible for GOLD funding, contact:

Blyth Valley area: Ian Humphreys, Blyth Valley Borough Council, c/o Neighbourhood Resource Team, Dinsdale House, 75 Marine Terrace, Blyth NE24 2LN tel 01670 542082

Wansbeck area: Lynda Watson, Neighbourhood Economic Regeneration, Wansbeck District Council, Council Offices, Front Street, Bedlington NE22 5TU tel 01670 843497

Alnwick & Rothbury areas: Ken Walters, Community Room, Rothbury Library, Front Street, Rothbury NE65 7TZ tel 01669 621770

Berwick & Coast/Glendale areas: Els Nicol, The Cheviot Centre, 12 Padgepool Place, Wooler NE71 6BL tel 01668 283232

Coalfield Villages area: Bill Carr, c/o Area Training & Activity Centre, Mile Road, Widdrington Station, Morpeth NE61 5QL tel 01670 791773

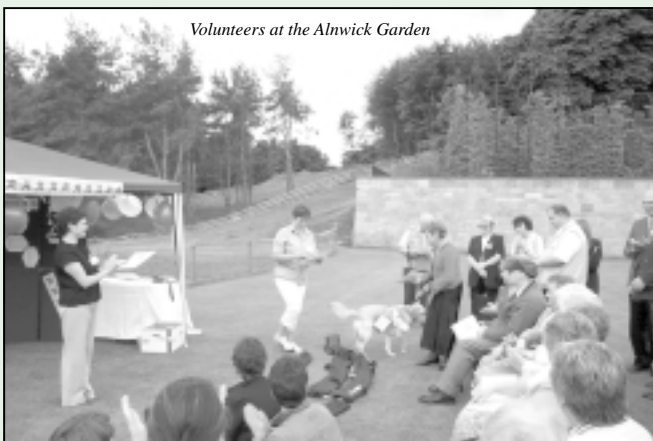
Eastern Tynedale area: Richard Powell, Hexham Community Centre, Gilesgate, Hexham NE46 3NH tel 01434 607871

North Tyne/Redesdale area: Jane Hart, Ground Floor Offices, Station Yard, Bellingham, Hexham NE48 2DG tel 01434 220154

West/South Tynedale area: Richard Sim, Westbourne House, Main Street, Haltwhistle NE49 9AD tel 01434 322766

Although GOLD is wide-ranging, there will still be many projects which are not eligible. For advice on alternative funding sources, do still contact your local advisor: CCN staff, or the Councils of Voluntary Service in Blyth Valley and Wansbeck.

Another June, Another Volunteers' Week



Volunteers at the Alnwick Garden

THE ALNWICK VOLUNTEER GARDEN PARTY was held in June at the Alnwick Garden. The event was well attended and successful. Forty-four volunteers from Alnwick and Gateshead received Volunteers' Week certificates and, along with sixteen members of paid staff from their organisations, enjoyed both a leisurely afternoon and an opportunity to view the gardens. The volunteers were able to spend some time sharing information about volunteering in their respective organisations and areas and it is hoped that a return visit can be made to Gateshead Alnwick volunteers some time in the future. The help of Alnwick Garden in arranging the event was much appreciated.

PRINCE OF WALES LEADS DRIVE FOR MORE AFFORDABLE RURAL HOUSING

MONICA BURNS, the Rural Housing Officer was recently invited to attend a launch of the Prince of Wales' rural housing initiative. The launch was attended by the Prince, the Duke of Westminster, the Chairman of The Housing Corporation, the President of the Country Land and Business Association, and the Chief Executive of Business in the Community as well as many others from the housing field.

The Prince introduced the initiative by stating "In many rural communities the housing needs of local people far outstrip the supply of affordable housing and the consequences are severe, particularly for young people.

We need to find new opportunities for landowners to bring forward rural sites; for developers to

(Continued on back page)

NEW MOMENTUM IN SCHOOLS' REVIEW

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL and its schools are facing new challenges as a result of urgent pressures coming from government departments and agencies.

A much-publicised report from Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education) in mid September was highly critical of the LEA's management, leadership, resource-allocation to schools, support for minority needs, asset management, financial administration and an array of other measures. Also, for some time, the Audit Commission has been pressing the LEA to reduce the level of surplus places and under-used accommodation in Northumberland's schools. At the same time, a poor funding settlement from central government has caused severe difficulties for many schools in trying to balance their annual budgets. During the summer, the County Council announced that Director of Education Dr Lindsey Davies would be leaving her post, and that the vacancy would be filled, for a period of 2-3 months, by the retiring Director of Gateshead LEA Mr Brian Edwards, pending the recruitment of Dr Davies' successor.

Now, Mr Edward's contract has been extended for 2 years, and he has assembled a new management team, supported by a broadly-based Partnership Board, to make significant changes not only to the organisation of the LEA, but also to the pattern and organisation of schools themselves.

The future direction of the LEA and the implication for schools, are not yet clear, but it seems likely that the post-Ofsted Action Plan will include, among other actions:

- a review of resource allocation to schools
- links with neighbouring LEAs to promote staff development
- renewed attempts to secure government backing for new buildings and refurbishments
- simultaneous reviews of surplus places, based on 4 localities, rather than sequential reviews of high school catchment areas
- consideration of different possible solutions to school organisation, in different parts of the county.

As a contribution to this process, a group of interested bodies (including the LEA, the Community Council, the diocesan education boards, the National Association of Small Schools, and others) are organising a conference in November. This will encourage a variety of community interests and educationists to consider new ways in which schools and communities can work together. This will then feed into more detailed dialogue within the 4 locality-based reviews which will follow during 2004.

Further information on the Ofsted Report and Action Plan is available from the Director of Education at County Hall, Morpeth.

NEW DATE FOR CCN AGM

THE NEW DATE for the AGM is Wednesday 26 November. All other details remain as previously announced -the venue will be Choppington Social Welfare Centre. There will be a hot and cold buffet meal at 1.00pm provided by the Centre. The cost and further details of the meal will be available from the administration staff at Tower Buildings and also enclosed with the Notice of the Meeting that that will be distributed to groups and organisations on our mailing list. (Meals must be ordered and paid for by 19 November).

At 2.30pm there will be the formal business of the AGM, to be chaired by our President, the Duke of Northumberland.

This will be followed by our guest speaker John Litherland, Chief Executive of the Northumberland Strategic Partnership who will be touching on Community Regeneration in Northumberland and the work of the NSP.

RABI AWARENESS WEEK

THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION (RABI) is one of the key organisations in the Northumberland Rural Stress Initiative's campaign to provide help to those in distress in rural areas.

October 11-19 is RABI awareness week when the charity promotes its work in helping farming families who are facing financial hardship.

Who does RABI help?

RABI is currently providing long-term support to over 1600 long-term beneficiaries. This includes retired farmers, farming widows and disabled members of the farming community.

The majority are receiving regular payments to help meet their living expenses, with additional gifts at Christmas and birthdays, while others qualify for one-off assistance to purchase specific essential items or to adapt their living accommodation to cope with increasing old age.

The aim is to help those who want to stay in their own homes to do so for as long as possible.

They are visited regularly by their local RABI regional welfare officers (RWO), to check on their well-being and to ensure that they do not need any additional assistance.

In addition to long-term support, RABI also makes one off payments for domestic expenses to those who are facing hard times-whether it is a result of the foot and mouth crisis, low returns in the arable sector or a change in circumstances. Last year, RABI paid out one-off grants totalling nearly £1.5 m to help over 1000 working farming families.

The steady rise in the numbers seeking assistance (a legacy of hard times in the industry) coupled with increasing life-expectancy means that RABI is heightening its fund-raising efforts to ensure that it can meet the future needs of farming's retired community.

If you know of a retired farmer, farm worker or a member of a farming family who is having difficulty making ends meet, or is in desperate need of an essential item they cannot afford, tell them about RABI.

You or they can talk in confidence with experienced RABI welfare staff by phoning the helpline - 01865 727888. Full details of RABI activities can be found on its website (www.rabi.org.uk)

LBI WOMEN NORTH EAST

THE REGIONAL lesbian and bisexual women's development project aims to promote and strengthen the lesbian and bisexual women's sector by:

- Supporting existing groups;
- Developing new initiatives;
- Acting as a source of information and support;
- Facilitating increased and improved contact between established groups and organisations;
- Working with service providers/policy makers to raise awareness and improve services;
- Promoting the views and interests of the groups within the lesbian and bisexual women's sector.

If you are a lesbian or bisexual woman living in the north east region; feel isolated or out of touch with what is available for lesbian or bisexual women; would like to meet others, join an existing group or set up a new one? Contact Pauline at LBI North East on 0191 2772045 or lbinortheast@freeuk.com

FURTHER ABBREVIATIONS

THE ARTICLE on abbreviations and acronyms included in the last edition of Community News has proved to be popular so the following are a few more to build up your knowledge about the mystery of what those infuriating abbreviations actually mean with the first one being a correction to the list in the last edition

CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DofEE	Department for Education and Employment
ESFVON	European Social Fund Voluntary Organisation Northern
MidNAG	Mid Northumberland Arts Group
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NFYFC	National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs
NORCAT	Northumberland College of Arts and Technology
NTEC	Northumberland Training and Enterprise Council
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RPF	Rural Projects Fund
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
WEA	Workers Education Association

If you come across any unusual and mystifying abbreviations or acronyms please contact Alan Hedley so that we can include them in subsequent editions of Community News. We'll also include a section on our website www.ccn.org.uk The challenge is to find the most bizarre and bewildering.

Council's Review Progress

WORK IS PROGRESSING on the review of the county and district councils in Northumberland. The Boundary Committee for England (part of the Government's Electoral Commission) is currently preparing a consultation document, for distribution in early December, outlining the pros and cons of several different options for merging the functions of these two tiers of council into a single unitary tier. This document will draw upon submissions which various local bodies made, during August.

The 6 district councils have proposed the creation of 3 unitary authorities, covering the South East (Blyth Valley and Wansbeck), the West (Tyndale and part of Castle Morpeth) and the North (Berwick, Alnwick and part of Castle Morpeth). The location of Morpeth within this arrangement has not been settled.

The County Council considered 4 different options, but firmly favoured the creation of one unitary authority. This would in effect mean the County Council absorbing into itself the current functions of the 6 district councils.

NALC (the Northumberland Association of Local Councils) stated that it had no strong views on whether the county and district councils should be reorganised but that, if this happens, consideration should be given to creating new parishes in Berwick town, Blyth Valley and Wansbeck, if there is local interest. NALC also stressed that, as any form of unitary local government would be remote from most communities, there would need to be an enhanced role for parish councils as a voice for local interests and, in some instances, to take on a greater executive role (ie provider of services).

Although the Boundary Committee will consult widely in the coming months, it will make no firm recommendations, because the electorate will be asked to choose between two options in a referendum to be held in Autumn 2004 as part of the Regional Assembly referendum.

Copies of the various submissions are available from the authorities themselves.

100% GRANTS UP TO £25 000 FROM THE LOCAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE

Not only that but LHI now makes payments in Advance!

WITH LOTTERY SUPPORT, the Countryside Agency has recently improved this scheme, which helps you to care for your local heritage. LHI can provide grants of between £3,000 and £25 000, with plenty of advice to community groups with ideas for good projects. Projects with local support can be 100% funded and grants are paid in advance. LHI projects can have an archaeological, natural, built, industrial or cultural focus to them, or indeed a mix of these themes, however it is important that they raise awareness of local heritage and give added benefit to the community.

Community groups don't need to be experts to apply. Parish Councils, other local bodies and schools have benefited from LHI grants in the North East. All that is required is a constitution and a bank account. Provided projects actively involve the local community, no cash is required! Projects in Northumberland which have benefited from LHI grants, include:

Cambo Parent Teachers Association received £14,198 to pass on to children from Cambo School, the cultural traditions of the area through traditional music, dance and stories. There was a one week summer school for the children, leading on to evening classes and there will be a future performance at Wallington Hall. There will also be booklets, calendars and a CD produced

Prudhoe Community Partnership was awarded £12,053 to preserve and manage an ancient woodland which was deteriorating due to neglect and abuse. Students are being trained to survey the wood, hold events to include local people, consult and develop a management plan.

Alnwick and District Beekeepers Association received £19,474 to research the Northumbria Honeybee with the help of Northumbria Wildlife Trust. They also want to help protect the future of the Honeybee and the traditional craft of beekeeping through establishment of a training apiary. School children will learn about the heritage of the honeybee through a variety of activities.

Keilder Community Trust received £21,927 to restore Kielder Viaduct, promote access to this and tell the story of the North Tyne Railway and its importance to the village. The group will also produce information panels, booklets and an exhibition.

"But there are a lot more LHI grants available, and local groups shouldn't lose out!", says LHI Adviser Fiona McKay. All over the country there are groups using LHI grants for projects finding out about local Customs and Traditions, Archaeological, Built, Industrial and Natural heritage. Group volunteers are also receiving training in all sorts of transferable skills and all funded through LHI. Groups report that their project has led to more group members, with more skills and more confidence, and above all, they say their projects were a lot of fun!

Ian Walton, LHI Administrator says "No one should be put off simply because they can't see something similar to the idea they have in mind in their area. Just give myself or Fiona a call on 0191 269 1600 and we'll do our best to help you out!" Or you can get further information from the Community Council Northumberland on 01670 517178.

If you have access to the internet, www.lhi.org.uk provides more information about the Local Heritage Initiative, and every LHI project is given its own free web page, so that you can learn from their experiences.

Application Packs are available from the Call Centre on 0870 9000 401 or may be downloaded from the website.

NORTHERN ROCK FOUNDATION UPDATE ON GRANT PRIORITIES AND TIMETABLES

READERS may recall the December 2002 issue of Community News in which we summarised the new grant programmes from the Northern Rock Foundation.

NRF have informed us that their new grant programmes have proved so popular that they have been receiving a substantial increase in eligible applications. They are currently dealing with a large number of applications and some of their programmes, in particular Basics and Prevention, are heavily over-subscribed. This means it is taking them longer to carry out their assessments, and they will, regretfully, have to turn down a large number of applications.

If you are considering applying under either the Basics or Prevention programme, you should note that in addition to their list of exclusions (organisations, projects and proposals they will not consider) in their guidelines they have set out priorities for the Prevention and Basics grant programmes. If an application does not fit one of these priorities they are unlikely to offer funding.

Full details of their grant programmes are on their website -

www.nr-foundation.org.uk

A FURTHER NEW COMMUNITY BUILDING FOR MORPETH

IN 1986 the Community Council of Northumberland moved into Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth. As well as providing office space for its own staff the building was large enough to enable CCN to make available affordable office accommodation for several other voluntary and charitable organisations. Tower Buildings is still the home of CCN along with Castle Morpeth Citizens' Advice Bureau, Northumberland Pre School Learning Alliance and Castle Morpeth Victim Support.

Since 1986 CCN has grown in size and despite an extension to their building the lack of available space is a real problem.

The Community Council is in the very early stages of establishing whether there are other county or Morpeth based charitable or voluntary organisations groups that would welcome a move to new premises. The CCN vision is a fully accessible purpose built new facility or specially adapted existing building somewhere in Morpeth, but not necessarily in the town centre, with sufficient office space for CCN requirements together with additional space for some other organisations. Ideally the building will have meeting/training room facilities and sufficient space and equipment to enable CCN to provide a resource centre for local groups.

There is much work to be done if such a vision is to be fulfilled. To begin with it will be necessary to establish the extent of the need for such a building. It will be necessary to complete a stock take of current community space in Morpeth and to consult with interested parties and stakeholders. Within the near future CCN will begin a trawl of interested parties and put together a structured action plan. In the meantime if any reader of this article wishes to express their interest in the proposed project they should contact Alan Hedley at Tower Buildings, Morpeth, tel 01670 517178 or by email to alanhedley@ccn.org.uk

THE RETURN OF IDLE ERIC

FOLLOWING ON from the '40 Not Out' campaign last year, the Men's Health Fund at the Community Foundation will be launching a new initiative in October 2003 and would like to hear from organisations and groups who provide activities for men across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland which help them gain better health.

The second project from the Men's Health Fund will aim to inform men that adding some exercise into their daily routine will be of substantial benefit to their health. The project which will be jointly funded and managed by the Tyne & Wear Health Action Zone will see the return of 'Idle Eric' in the promotional campaign designed by VIZ and will also develop a website so that men can find out about activities in their area along with general health advice.

The project needs the help of local people to find out about events and activities in their local communities that men can take part in, to feature on the website. This could be anything from the local football, bowls or cricket clubs, walking, fishing or cycling events, or men's groups hosted by community organisations. The groups or events don't have to be exclusively for men, just ones that men can take part in. Please contact Elaine Wilson on (0191) 4619202 or by email at e.wilson@ghnt.nhs.uk with details of your group or activity. When the website is completed it will be promoted through Metro Radio and a series of adverts on the Metro system and bus sides and it is hoped to attract a record number of visitors.

Elaine Wilson, Communications Manager from Tyne & Wear Health Action Zone said: "For the website to be a success, it is essential that we find out from local groups, clubs and organisations about things happening in their communities. This is a great opportunity for organisations to promote their activities and get new members so we hope that many of them will get in touch so we can include them on the website."

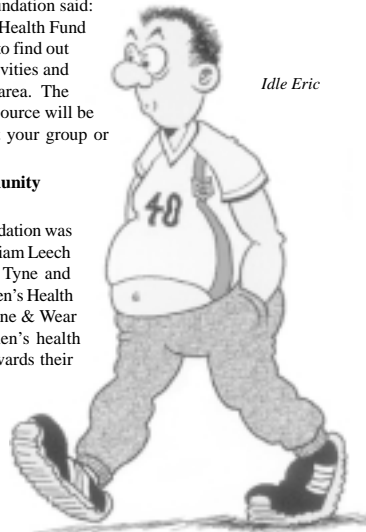
George Hepburn from the Community Foundation said: "We hope that this new initiative of the Men's Health Fund will provide a valuable resource for local men to find out how they can improve their health and the activities and opportunities available for them in their local area. The more groups we know about, the better the resource will be so please get in touch and let us know about your group or activity."

About the Men's Health Fund at the Community Foundation

Men's Health Fund at the Community Foundation was established last year in partnership with the William Leech Charity, Newcastle Building Society and the Tyne and Wear Health Action Zone. The purpose of the Men's Health Fund is to support projects or initiatives, in Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, that aim to improve men's health by changing the culture of men's thinking towards their own health.

The Community Foundation welcomes applications to the fund, and further information about the fund and how to apply can be found on the Community Foundation website:

www.communityfoundation.org.uk
or by phoning 0191 2220945.



LEADER+ SUMMER CONFERENCE

GEORGE SCOTT, on his first day as the new Chairman of the Local Action Group, opened the Leader+ Summer Conference at the Maltings, in Berwick-upon-Tweed, on 11 September. He encouraged the 40 delegates, who were representing various community groups from all over North Northumberland, to become actively involved in the Leader+ programme through the three workshops with the themes of Food and Drink, Young People and Women's Issues.

Neil Wilson, Programme Manager of the Leader+ programme, hopes to make it easier for groups to apply and to become involved in the Local Action Group Executive (LAG). He commented "The LAG have allocated over £500,000 to projects so far, however this means that we still have over £1.4m to distribute before the end of 2008."

The delegates found the day to be both informative and constructive. Action plans are currently being designed from the workshop responses. These will be presented at the next Leader+ event, the December conference at a venue to be confirmed.



Neil Wilson, Leader+ Programme Manager, and George Scott, Chairman of the Local Action Group, speak at the Leader+ Summer Conference

NEW STAFF

KELVIN RUSHWORTH

Kelvin Rushworth, of Seahouses, has been appointed as temporary part-time Development Worker at the Berwick office of North Northumberland Voluntary Action.

In his twenties, Kelvin worked as a teacher, senior manager in educational publishing and a middle manager (specialising in community involvement and community development) at Northgate Hospital and with North Tyneside Social Services.

Then, for twenty five years, he was the Director of Northern Mind and a member, officer, trustee or chair of numerous voluntary organisations and community groups at local, regional and national levels. His international work, in the mental health field, included projects in Abu Dhabi, Finland, Israel, Poland and Sri Lanka.

In January 2001 he became Development Worker for RuralMinds Northumberland. Currently, he is Vice Chair of Voices of Experience, Chair of Northern Views, Trustee of Berwick Citizens Advice Bureau and a member of both the North East Regional Committee of the Community Fund and the North East Older People's Advisory Group.

FROM THESE PAGES IN

1984

President Elect - Lord Joicy

After 17 years as President of the Community Council, Lord Rideley is retiring, due to his new commitments as Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland. At its Annual General Meeting on the 23 October, the Council will be electing a new President - thankfully without the razzamatazz of other presidential elections!

Lord Joicy of Etal has agreed to serve as our President and will be nominated by the Executive Committee.

1988

Out of Town and Out of Work

Unemployment blackspots, where large numbers of people are out of work, are nearly always in urban areas and the problems of unemployment are almost invariably associated with towns and inner cities and with the closure of large employers, such as pits, factories or shipyards.

Rural unemployment does not on the whole occur in blackspots and the numbers of people out of work in most Northumberland villages can be counted on the fingers of one hand. But being the only person made redundant from a particular farm or the only school-leaver without a job does not make the difficulties faced by the individual any less.

1993

Nearing the Centenary

With the rapid approach of 1994, NALC is preparing to celebrate the first centenary of parish councils. Work is well in hand to publish a Centenary History of Parish Councils, with a lot of case study material about individual councils around the country, including Northumberland. The book is expected to be available in January.

1998

Lynemouth Pirates Find Treasure

Pirates have been seen sighted at the Lynemouth Playscheme! Reports have reached the Community Council that these invaders, complete with eye patches, seafaring attire and a thirst for treasure have been on the rampage. However, there's really no need for alarm as the pirates are in fact young people who attended the Playscheme which ran for the first time this on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the holidays.



Kelvin Rushworth

THE IMPACT OF DOING A PARISH PLAN

BRANXTON, a remote parish at the foot of the Cheviot Hills with around 121 inhabitants, has quite literally come alive again as a result of the villagers developing an Action Plan as part of their Parish Plan.

Due to the decline in local services and the need to encourage action to save the Village Hall, the parish Council and the local community decided, in March 2002, to formulate a Parish Plan. The Community Council of Northumberland was keen to support the process and worked alongside the community.

Their final report is now a strong piece of evidence, showing trusts, funding organisations and the local authority what is needed in Branxton, not just to keep the community from further decline, but to start the process of regeneration. The parish Plan also has a clear plan of action for the next 5 years, which was picked up by the relevant groups within the parish.

Els Nicol, the Community Development Officer, who has worked with the group throughout explains: "Although we know that communities benefit from the involvement of doing a Parish Plan, I had personally never experienced the success it would bring with funding applications. Less than 15 months onwards from the first contact, Branxton has raised a phenomenal amount of funds to support regeneration and sustainability in the parish. There is a real buzz and feeling of confidence about the projects and the village."

Their first successful project was the renovation and redevelopment of the Village hall. This project received funding from DEFRA, Northern Rock and Lloyds TSB Foundation up to a total of £79,000. The Village hall is being extended and refurbished at the moment, so the village has no place to have local meetings, but the building work is expected to be finished by January 2004. The Village Hall will then have disabled access, new toilets, a new kitchen, a new storage room and a computer suite. Gas central heating and an emergency generator are also to be installed in case of prolonged power cuts, as happened two years ago. The Hall will then double up as an emergency centre offering warmth and hot food during the duration of the crisis.



Branxton Village Hall

The village is keen to support the Village Hall and is discussing new events, clubs and other activities.

Their second success was obtaining funding for an information leaflet about the Battle of Flodden, also known as The Battle of Branxton Moor. Although a small application, it was seen as a necessary step in raising awareness of the Flodden Battlefield and its significance for the village of Branxton. Funding of £500 came from the Northumberland County Council Small Grants Scheme. So far over 1500 leaflets have been printed and distributed.

Their third, and most recent, success has been an award of £25,000 funding from the Local heritage Initiative for the development of the Flodden Battlefield. This project will involve the following:

- Putting in place footpaths, interpretation boards and locally made seats around the battlefield;
- A route for cars, that will access the interpretation boards and seats as well;
- A video with aerial shots highlighting the landscape and how the topography affects the outcome of the Battle;
- A website;
- A lawn-mower to maintain parts of the path;
- A mobile exhibition, to be located in the Village Hall; and
- Flagpoles, with the possibility of a Branxton flag designed by the children of the village.

The group that worked on the application for the last 3 months proudly admits that all the hard work is beginning to pay off and they are keen to get started on the real work as soon as possible.

The Parish Council is keen that all the developments at the Battlefield and in the Village hall should be inter-linked to safeguard sustainability and revitalisation for the whole of the village and the parish of Branxton. Both projects are seen as the start of many more future developments.

CHARITY SECURES £1/2 MILLION

THE OUTDOOR TRUST is a charitable trust that has just secured £1/2 million of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Learning Skills Council (LSC) to provide training to young people from Northumberland. This is a real boost to the area and is one of the largest projects of its kind currently being undertaken. The money will cover all training costs as well as providing board and lodging for those who require it.

The Outdoor Trust has been delivering challenging educational and outdoor activities to a wide variety of groups for over 25 years. Activities are diverse and include canoeing, kayaking, climbing, abseiling, team building and hill walking to name but a few. This money will enable the Trust to train up to 40 young people aged between 16 and 24 on a modern apprenticeship scheme. Trainees will work with

existing experienced instructors and train 'on the job' with groups from schools to scouts and adults too. All participants will work towards qualifications with real value in the industry such as NVQ2 Outdoor Leadership and National Governing Body awards in many of the activities being coached.

As a pathway to employment in the outdoor industry this is a real opportunity to gain valuable skills but it won't be an easy ride. An outdoor instructor has to be enthusiastic in all weathers and needs the ability to motivate their group and inspire them to achieve their potential. The hours are long but the rewards are great for those who want to succeed. It's an alternative lifestyle and definitely not for those people looking for a 9-5 experience. Anyone requiring more information can contact Phil Vincent at the Outdoor Trust on 01668 213289.

(Continued from front page)

achieve high quality and sustainable developments; for financial institutions to develop innovative ways to make such schemes viable; and for business, more generally, to recognise that it can do something to help, like releasing empty properties or space over the shops in market towns to be let as flats".

The Prince of Wales together with the Duke of Westminster, the Housing Corporation and the Countryside Agency are funding two new posts at Business in the Community. These two new 'Affordable Rural Housing Directors' will work with companies at a senior level to help them find ways to make available land and buildings for affordable housing.

The overall aim of the initiative is to provide affordable accommodation in rural areas for local people. The initiative identifies ways in which many of the obstacles to the provision of accommodation can be overcome. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Westminster are currently identifying sites on their land that are suitable for affordable housing developments. The Duchy of Cornwall has identified 11 possible sites for affordable houses from as small as one or two dwellings up to 25 or more. The Prince is encouraging other landowners to do the same.

The Rural Housing Officers in Northumberland are very keen to promote this initiative as it is acknowledged that the rural housing situation here in Northumberland reflects the national rural housing picture. The processes and obstacles identified in this initiative are



Branxton Monument

operating here in rural Northumberland.

The make up of many rural communities in Northumberland has been changing over the past decade with the advantages of rural life becoming apparent to many urban dwellers. This trend has been fuelled by increased transport both private and public together with flexibility in working hours and home working. The in migration of people into rural Northumberland who have generally been on higher incomes than their rural counterparts has forced house prices to increase out of the affordability range of many of the indigenous population. The low incomes received in many rural areas again influences this affordability aspect and further exacerbates the problem of an already uneven playing field.

The impact of the Right to Buy has left many villages in Northumberland with few or no affordable homes to rent. The replacement of these homes has not been successful with the limited supply of appropriate land and increased construction costs being major obstacles. Many of the previous council homes are now let as holiday homes or kept as second homes and are therefore empty for large parts of the year.

Local services depend largely on the resident population for their trade. If therefore a proportion of the local housing is unoccupied for a proportion of time the already tenuous viability of these services is further threatened.

This initiative aims to increase the supply of affordable accommodation in rural areas thereby not only providing accommodation for local people but in addition preserving local services.

Further information on this initiative is available on the following web sites :-

Affordable Housing: Opportunities for farmers and landowners - www.housingcorp.gov.uk or obtained free from Housing Corporation Publications on 0207 3932228.

This booklet includes information and advice on getting a rural scheme started, bringing empty properties back into use, and advantages for landowners in providing rural housing.

Affordable Housing Opportunities for Business' - www.bitc.org.uk or obtained free from 0870 600 2482. This guide includes sections on developing land, bringing empty properties back into use, opportunities for commercial property owners, and accessing finance.

Alternatively contact Monica Burns on 01668 283232 or Gillian Wheeler on 01669 620569 and we will be pleased to assist and/or advise anyone wishing to become involved in this initiative.

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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Community Council - Morpeth	01670 517178	info@ccn.org.uk	christinahall@ccn.org.uk
		davidfrancis@ccn.org.uk	alanhedley@ccn.org.uk
			lindafrater@ccn.org.uk
Fax	01670 511400		
Northumberland Association of Local Councils	01670 517178		nalc@ccn.org.uk
Northumberland Rural Stress Initiative	01670 505278		susancross@ccn.org.uk
REALL	01670 505451	mervynanthony@ccn.org.uk	janefernette@ccn.org.uk
CCN - Alnwick	01665 606578	mikylarobinson@ccn.org.uk	wendyfergie@ccn.org.uk
Alnwick - Leader +	01665 603852		info@leader-northumberland.org.uk
		neilwilson@ccn.org.uk	dawnbrodie-clarke@ccn.org.uk
Alnwick - NNVA	01665 605772	sandidowning@ccn.org.uk	ianhell@ccn.org.uk
Alnwick CARAD	01665 605030		barbaraking@ccn.org.uk
Berwick - Motivate	01289 308338		jobogson@ccn.org.uk
Berwick - NNVA	01289 308338	kelvinrushworth@ccn.org.uk	terrieharhope@ccn.org.uk
Bellingham	01434 220154		janehart@ccn.org.uk
Bellingham Community Trust	01434220714		lesleyallen.bct@btinternet.com
Haltwhistle	01434 322766		richardsim@ccn.org.uk
Hexham	01434 607871	richardpowell@ccn.org.uk	joangalley@ccn.org.uk
Rothbury	01669 621770		kenwatters@ccn.org.uk
Widdrington Station	01670 791773	billcarr@ccn.org.uk	janedavies@ccn.org.uk
Wooler	01668 281188		elsnicol@ccn.org.uk
Rural Housing Officers	01668 283232	monicaburns@ccn.org.uk	gillianwheeler@ccn.org.uk