



NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY

NEWS

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A FUTURE IN OUR SCHOOLS

AT THE END OF JANUARY, Northumberland County Council's Education Department published its proposals for the future pattern of schooling in the county. The proposals include a number of options, based on varying numbers of closures and amalgamations. A major aim of the review is to attract capital funding from the DfES (Department for Education and Skills), in order to provide new premises, and to refurbish others. To achieve this, the LEA has to convince the DfES that it is taking action to reduce significantly the amount of surplus accommodation. At the same time, the LEA is looking to address its revenue funding problems, by finding ways of reducing the overheads.

As a result, the proposals are a mixture: some new schools may be built; others may close; some will be 'federated' together into a single organisational structure, under a single head teacher; some may accommodate new uses (such as libraries and offices); some may be moved to a different site; and some may remain but serving a different age group of pupils or a different catchment area.

For each high school pyramid area, two or three options are put forward. All options involve the closure of all middle schools. In some instances, first/primary schools would then be relocated on to the sites of the former middle schools. A number of village schools appear to be under particular threat: for example, Byrness, Kielder, Greenhaugh, Swarland, Branton (nr Powburn), Horncliffe, Acklington, Lowgate (nr Hexham), Beaufront (nr Hexham), among others.

The LEA has written to all schools and to all parents of current pupils, asking for views. It is not clear whether, or at what stage, other interested parties (such as communities, and

planning authorities) will be consulted. Representatives from community groups and agencies who attended two recent conferences on the schools review during January, were left thoroughly confused about the process and what part they might play within it.

The Community Council's Executive Committee has expressed its concern at the apparent haste and confusion associated with this review process. Despite the LEA's assertion last Autumn that different solutions may be appropriate in different areas, no options are offered for the continuation of the 3-tier system. No consideration has been given to the significant role and value given by middle schools, not only to the education of our 9 to 14 year olds, but also to local communities and economies throughout the county. It is unclear why federal arrangements are proposed for some small schools but not others, or indeed why some schools have been identified for closure. The LEA have also failed to explain why the creative thinking which it was encouraging during Spring 2003 in the Berwick area has now apparently been abandoned.

Although the consultation document makes no reference to this, Cllr Jim Wright, the County Council's Executive Member responsible for Children's Services, has promised consultation with stakeholders in late February. It will be essential that this process embraces all interested parties: parish councils, community associations, district councils, voluntary service providers, and so on.

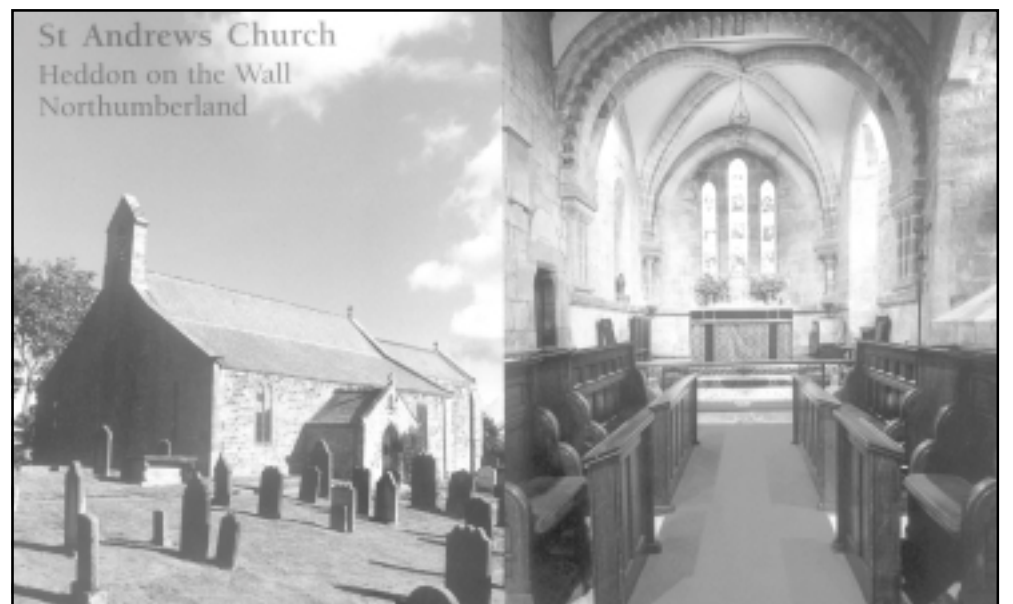
Whether people support or reject particular proposals, it is important that they make their views known: the County Council has accelerated its review process, and so very little time will be available, especially if groups need to come together to generate new thinking and fresh proposals.

Copies of the review document are available, on request from the County Council (County Hall, Morpeth NE61 2EF tel 01670 533000) or from the Council's website www.northumberland.gov.uk

A SPRING DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

THE DATE for the Spring General Meeting of the Community Council of Northumberland is Wednesday afternoon 12 May. The venue will be the Rothbury Jubilee Hall where those attending will have the opportunity to view the recently completed refurbishment within this splendid building that dates back to 1887. The business part of the meeting will commence at 2.30pm with tea and biscuits available from 2.00pm. More details will follow in the next issue but in the meantime mark the date in your diary.

HEDDON ON THE WALL HERITAGE CENTRE



FROM ALLEN VALLEY to Bamburgh, Brinkburn and Craster, Kielder, Branxton, and Prudhoe successful Local Heritage Initiatives have sprung up. To add to this string of successes Northumberland now has its first Local Heritage Lottery Initiative Development Grant: Heddon on the Wall Heritage Centre. A development grant of £3000 has been given to assist a project move forward in order that a full size grant application can eventually be submitted.

Heddon on the Wall: the story so far. For a number of years a dedicated and committed group of volunteers, supported by the Diocese of Newcastle and the local priest, have been working to share the love of their parish church and their area with visitors and local people. Tourists from all around the globe, drawn by the lure of Hadrian's Wall, have been attracted to the church on the hill to be met by volunteers prepared to share the delights of their knowledge of the area's heritage.

In reality, the church isn't particularly unique; there are many similar places of worship throughout the country. What is so

special? What is it that brings the place alive? It is the enthusiasm of the people prepared to share the story of this special place.

Churches have stood at the centre of the communities for centuries, placing the Christian faith at its heart, a focal point for rites of passage, providing a range of activities that have formed and shaped our culture. In a small way, the group at Heddon are attempting to continue this tradition by sharing insights and knowledge with locals and visitors alike. Did you know that there is even a curse placed on part of the building? Definitely worth a visit to investigate!

LHI projects are funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and with its funding the project

(Continued on next page)

SUPPORTING VOLUNTARY ACTION

WE IN THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL were pleased to hear that the Community Fund (National Lottery Charities Board) has agreed to fund a further two years of our North Northumberland Voluntary Action work. This team, which is led by Sandi Downing, promotes and supports voluntary services, self-help groups, co-operation with statutory services and individual volunteering, primarily in the health and social care fields. This is a second time that the Community Fund has supported this work, which will support the continuity of our Alnwick office. Regrettably, our approaches to other funders to support our Berwick office have not borne fruit so far.

Across the county, we are beginning to work with other 'voluntary/community sector infrastructure bodies', such as the councils of voluntary service, as part of a government initiative to promote a strategic and co-ordinated approach to the provision of support to our sector. We will report more fully on this, as the strategy begins to develop.

EU FUNDING MORATORIUM

SHORTLY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, we learnt the good news that the North-East region's European Objective 2 programme had been successful in meeting its targets for the first half (ie the period to December 2003). This was a major achievement for all parties involved, not least for the staff of GONE (Government Office for the North East) who 'pulled out all of the stops' in the closing months of 2003 to ensure that there was no underspend, which would have to be returned to Brussels.

Over the past few years a wide range of projects have been supported: new enterprise parks; vocational guidance and training for unemployed and under-employed people; advice, grants and loans for new and expanding businesses; new community buildings; environmental projects, and so on. In Northumberland, the community-led Priority 4 part of the programme was successful in allocating the £6.3 million (and a little more) which it had at its disposal. In addition the new GOLD fund, launched last October, is making £1 million available to local groups, through hundreds of smaller grants.

Unfortunately, we also learnt in December the very bad news: that the region had allocated not only the resources available for the first half of the programme, but also most of the second half as well. Areas elsewhere in the region have benefited significantly as a result, but it will now create substantial problems for community projects, in Northumberland and elsewhere, for the next few years. The sorts of local projects which might have been supported in 2002 and 2003, may not be supported in 2004 or 2005.

At the time of writing this article (February 2004), the situation is still being reviewed. We very much hope to be able to report the outcome in our next edition.

(Continued from front page)

will establish a sound organisation and engage with the wider community of Heddon so that the stories and experiences will not be lost. Visits are planned by the group to see what they can learn from similar projects in the North. Already the project had acted as a catalyst for a group to consider the wider regeneration of Heddon. The local pub, directly opposite the church, has also benefited from the tourists visiting the Wall and the church. The school wants to learn more about the church. Continuing their interest in the project the Newcastle Diocese is keen to see how the experiences of this church can be shared throughout Northumberland. Serious considerations are also being given to the theological impacts of the project: resurrection at the heart of the community! Now that's a certainty. Eddie Tingate, one of the founders of the project, expressed his elation at being awarded the grant. 'I am absolutely delighted. Not only will the funds help to establish the future of the project for Heddon, it also means that we will be able to share our experiences with other groups'. Durham Cathedral move over: Heddon's on a roll.

Local Heritage Initiative is a national grant scheme that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. Local

Heritage Initiative (LHI) funds what is important to local people and their heritage. Grants help community groups to research their local heritage, take care of it and raise awareness about it. Projects must be able to show there is wider community benefit.

The Initiative is an England-wide scheme that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. The grant is provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) but the scheme is a partnership, administered by the Countryside Agency with additional funding from Nationwide Building Society. Nationwide makes additional award to help groups to involve special needs groups. The scheme was launched in February 2000 and is planned to run for 10 years.

For more information contact Fiona McKay, LHI Adviser, or Michael Patterson Administrator, Cross House, Westgate Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4XX tel: 0191 269 1600 or you can get an application pack by calling 0870 900 0401

If you think that you might have a project that might benefit from LHI funding check out the comprehensive Countryside Agency Website, where there are details of the Heritage Lottery Initiative can be found: Countryside Agency under grants Heritage Lottery. www.countryside.gov.uk

NORTH EAST GUIDE TO GRANTS FOR INDIVIDUALS - 3RD EDITION NOW AVAILABLE

FUNDING INFORMATION NORTH EAST has published the 3rd edition of its, "North East Guide to Grants for Individuals" (2004/2005).

The Guide contains information on over 90 charitable trusts which support individuals, to relieve need and for educational purposes, living 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 financial information.

There are also useful sections which provide advice on approaching trusts for support and other sources of help in identifying funds for individuals.

The publication is useful to anyone who works with individuals, particularly social and health workers and advice organisations.

The Guide is available in paperback (price, £10.00 plus £1.50 postage and packing) and on CD (cost £30.00). The CD uses bookmarks and links to help the user find the information they require. It will run on operating systems, Windows 95 and above. It is not suitable for use on Apple Mac computers.

To order copies please contact Funding Information North East, John Haswell House, 8/9 Gladstone Terrace, Gateshead, NE8 4DY. tel: 0191 477 1253 or email: enquiries@fine.org.uk. You can also find an order form on the website; www.fine.org.uk

Funding Information North East researches sources of funding information for the voluntary and community sector in the North East of England and keeps organisations up to date with funding opportunities via publications and regular information bulletins. To find out more about FINE and its services contact a member of the team at the above address.

VITAL VILLAGES - NEW APPLICATION PACK

THE VITAL VILLAGES Application Pack has now been updated to the new funding priorities of the Countryside Agency. Information in the pack is more user friendly and the forms and guidance notes are clearly colour-coded to make them more attractive and easier to follow. The colour band on the outer folder has also been changed - from red to blue - to readily distinguish the new pack from the previous one.

To order a new pack telephone 0870 120 6466. Alternatively CCN's Community Development Officers hold a small stock of the new packs should you wish to contact your local officer.

An online version of the pack is also available for viewing or down loading in the Vital Villages area of the website: www.countryside.gov.uk/VitalVillages/active_communities/get_information.asp

NORTH EAST WAR MEMORIALS PROJECT

SINCE 1988, volunteers have been recording war memorials in the North East as part of the National Inventory set up by the Imperial War Museum.

In the North East of England, over 3,300 memorials have been recorded in the area between the Rivers Tweed and Tees. They cover everything from the street monuments, school prizes, plaques, lychgates, church furnishings, libraries, books of remembrance, annuity funds, rows of houses, village halls. They commemorate groups of people or individuals. Memorials to the two great wars are still being erected, but a tree to commemorate those who died in Iraq in 2003 has been planted in Morpeth. It seems the job of recording them will never be finished!

The importance of war memorials as a social statement cannot be underestimated. There is not only the loss of life to consider, but also the needs of those who carry the burden at home both during and after conflict. Many lessons can be learned from studies of such times, with the memorials acting as focal points.

In the past few years, memorials have come under scrutiny from the maintenance point of view. Many are being restored or re-housed. Sadly, many have been lost, mainly because the building in which they were placed has been closed, though efforts to re-house them are increasing.

Initially, the Northumberland survey was covered by the Association of Northumberland Local History Societies, whose records were lodged with the Northumberland Record Office in 1993. Since then, a lot more information has been uncovered and these files need to be updated. The search for memorials in Newcastle upon Tyne has been operative for some years, though not made available publicly. The Imperial War Museum sought people to work on Tyne and Wear and North Durham, and this has produced a massive corpus of information. Besides the organised search, there are many people working on their own private projects on individual memorials, mainly in the research on names featured. The name of anybody who submits any information to the project is acknowledged on the relevant files.

The need to pull all this information together and make it freely available to all in a coherent form has resulted in the formation of a group called the North East War Memorials Project, which is hoping to be registered as a charity. Mrs Janet Brown, who has been co-ordinating the team project since it started in 1988, has been appointed Chairman, with Mrs Dorothy Hall of Chester le Street as Secretary and Mr John Dixon of Bishop Auckland as Treasurer.

The group will seek funding to make the information available, possibly with a view to having it placed on the Internet. In any event, the group will find a way of disseminating the information, through school education packs, or CDs and any other such media as funds will allow.

Mrs Janet Brown can be contacted at Bilsdale, Ulgham, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 3AR. Tel. 01670 790465

Regional Assembly and Council Review

THE SOLUTION to the North East's economic ills, or a cynical plot by Brussels to disempower our national Government? This polarity of views, articulated by vociferous minorities, appears to characterise the current 'debate', if there is one, on the pros and cons of forming a Directly-Elected Regional Assembly for the North East. The electorate of the region will be invited to vote in a referendum on this question in the Autumn, probably November. Current indications are that most people either do not know or do not care about this issue.

For people in Northumberland and Durham, the question of a Regional Assembly is being directly linked to a re-organisation of county and district councils. The Boundary Committee's draft proposals, published in December, indicate that the choice will be between one or two unitary authorities, to replace the current 7 councils. Both of these solutions are intended to produce some savings in the overall running costs of local government, and each will involve the amalgamation or fragmentation of current services and departments.

There is a need for an objective and independent analysis of these implications, free from any gloss or spin. We do not really know whether costly, specialist services such as education and social services could be effectively be run by two (instead of the current one) council. Conversely, we do not know whether a single unitary authority could develop a more accessible and democratic culture than the current arrangements. We do not know whether the savings (if any) in the running costs of local government, would be retained within Northumberland to be ploughed back into front-line services.

Both the Community Council and NALC (the Northumberland Association of Local Councils) have been discussing these issues in recent months, but there are still more questions than answers. If the electorate of Northumberland are expected to make reasoned choices in an Autumn referendum, there is still a long way to go to ensure that the implications are clearly spelt out.

The closing date for making comments to the Boundary Committee, on options for creating unitary local authorities in Northumberland, is 23 February 2004. Copies of the NALC submission to Stage Three of the Boundary Committee's consultation are available from NALC at Tower Buildings.

RAISING AWARENESS

'RAISING SKILLS, RAISING FUNDS' was another successful event organised by North Northumberland Voluntary Action as part of their continuing support for voluntary and community groups in north Northumberland. Held on 16 December 2003 at the Lindisfarne Annexe in Alnwick, the event was attended by representatives of the Hadrian Trust, The Community Foundation, Grant Opportunities for Local Development (G.O.L.D.), Northumberland County Council Small Grants Scheme, Comic Relief, the Co-op Community Dividend Scheme and Alnwick Area Partnership Social Fund.

Sandi Downing, NNVA Project Co-ordinator said, 'the free funding awareness workshop was aimed at smaller groups aiming to raise up to £1,000 and we were delighted to welcome members of 23 local groups who came along to find out how to access grant money. Information sessions on what to do before filling in application forms, what to write in forms and funders' procedures in dealing with applications were keenly followed. We would like to thank the funders who participated for their time and expertise which contributed to a very successful afternoon and evening. We look forward to hearing about successful grant applications and will pass on any good news to readers of NCN.'

The next training sessions to be organised by NNVA will be covering child protection awareness and will take place in Alnwick and Berwick.

ARCHERY FOR ALL ABILITIES

The "MOTIVATE" project was set up 9 months ago to encourage and provide opportunities for people of ALL ABILITIES to participate in Sport and Physical activities.

Jo Gibson, the development worker, has organised various FREE Taster Sessions in Berwick, the Archery session (illustrated) being one of the most successful. Similar activities will be promoted in other parts of Berwick Borough.



EVERYONE NEEDS A BREAK



Fun and care at WFT children's activity centre

IMAGINE IF YOU HAD BEEN on call 24 hours a day for the entire 365 days of last year without a holiday. This was a reality during 2003 for the 1 in 10 people in the UK who care for a disabled person, usually a relative or loved one. Disabled people themselves also face great difficulty going out and taking part in social activities that many of us take for granted. Winged Fellowship Trust (WFT) helps disabled children and adults from all parts of England, including Northumberland, by providing them with a unique support service: WFT is the only UK charity that offers holidays for disabled people that combine 24-hour care on-call with a programme of social activities. People with a wide range of disabilities are given the opportunity to take part in activities, excursions and special interest weeks, while their carer has the chance to take a much-needed break.

WFT provides this support from five holiday centres across the country and is appealing for donations to help continue its vital work. If you would like to help, please send a cheque, payable to Winged Fellowship Trust, to: The Trusts Officer, WFT, FREEPOST ND 1287, London N1 9BR. For more information visit www.wft.org.uk

NEW STAFF AT CCN

COLETTE BARKER AND CLARE WOOD have recently joined the staff at the Community Council working in the Alnwick area. They are based at the Connexions offices at 24 Fenkle Street, Alnwick, NE66 1HR and can be contacted on 01665 605540. In addition Colette's mobile number is 07812 091516.

COLETTE BARKER



COLETTE BARKER is the new Outreach and Development Worker for the Clayport Ward. Colette introduces herself to our readers in the following terms.

I'm 32 years old, married to my husband Nick and have 4 children, Leanne, Bethany, Jordan and Jack. We live in the Clayport Ward so when this job opportunity came up it was the ideal time to do some good work in the community in which I live.

I have been involved in youth work since the age of 19. Over the years I have worked for various organisations including the Duchess High School, the Gallery Youth Project and the Alnwick North Community Centre.

In my spare time I enjoy walking my dog, spending time with my children and swimming.

CLARE WOOD



CLARE WOOD has recently become the Community Development Officer for the Community Council of Northumberland in the Alnwick District.

Previously the Development Manager of Learning Choices where most of her experience comes from working with farming communities throughout the rural area of Northumberland, providing training opportunities in local venues.

Clare has lived in a very rural area of Northumberland at Fontburn Reservoir with her husband and 2 children since moving from Reading 6 years ago. Therefore, she can appreciate and empathise with many of the issues surrounding rural living.

MORE WORMS

THE INVASION OF THE RECENT I-Worm/Mydoom virus has been an annoyance to most businesses, community groups, charitable and voluntary organisations and home computer users. Because most organisations are adequately covered by anti virus software the real damage has been to those without adequate anti virus protection, mainly home users. There is no real excuse for being without anti virus software as free programs are available on the internet. The free edition of AVG Anti virus software can be downloaded from www.grisoft.com

A few years ago Community News featured an article entitled Virus or Hoax which attempted to inform readers how to recognise virus infected and hoax email messages. Since then a steady stream of people have asked for a copy of this article which explains the difference between viruses and hoax messages and points readers to some valuable websites that give much additional information. That article can be found in the mid June to mid August 2002 issue (Vol. 22 No.3) that can be viewed on the CCN website at www.ccn.org.uk.

Alternatively you can request a copy of the article by emailing alanhedley@ccn.org.uk

THE LICENSING ACT 2003 - HOW WILL IT AFFECT COMMUNITY BUILDINGS?

What happens now?

The current situation is that under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 all places which are used for public dancing, music, or public displays, contests or exhibitions of sport or other types of entertainment must hold a Public Entertainment Licence (PEL). The licence regulates/controls:

- (a) the safety of the premises when members of the public are present (fire safety, maximum numbers in attendance, hygiene)
- (b) the prevention of nuisance (noise, rowdiness in and out of the premises).

The PEL covers music, singing and dancing but does not cover stage performances such as plays, pantomimes and operas. A separate Theatre Licence is needed for those.

Normally no fee is payable for a PEL if the applicant is a church hall, village hall, parish hall or similar community building.

The licensing and enforcing authority is the local authority applicable to where the community building is situated.

The whole point of the licence procedure and the conditions attached to obtaining a licence is to safeguard the safety of the public and prevent public nuisance.

PELs are normally granted for a period of one year and most community buildings requiring a licence will apply for one year licenses. However people can apply for occasional licences which cover only one off events or a series of such events eg barn dances, line dancing events.

Alcohol and the community building

Alcohol is often provided at a Social Event in a hall / community centre. However the sale of alcohol is strictly governed by various licensing acts.

Most halls/centres do not supply alcohol on a permanent basis but only from time to time as part of an event. In these circumstances an occasional licence is appropriate.

Application for an occasional licence must be made, in duplicate, to the Licensing Justices in the licensing district where the hall is and the event is to take place, at least 3 weeks before the date of the next licensing session. (In practice 2 months is more usual).

A Hall itself can obtain a maximum of 12 occasional licences in a 12 month period or use a local publican to provide a bar service. In that instance the publican makes an application for the occasional license. The 1983 Licensing (Occasional Permissions) Act allows for different voluntary organisations to each apply for up to 12 permissions per year to serve alcohol. Thus there is currently provision for an almost unlimited number of occasional licences in a year for any one community building.

The new regime

The Licensing Act 2003 will affect those involved in the following businesses and activities: Pubs and nightclubs; Indoor sporting events; Off-licences; Restaurants that serve alcohol, Businesses offering hot food between 11.00pm and 5.00am; Hotels, guest houses and other places that sell alcohol; Private members clubs and social clubs; Theatres and amateur dramatics groups; Cinemas; Organisers of occasional entertainments.

The four principal objectives of the legislation are:

- (a) the prevention of unreasonable public nuisance
- (b) the prevention of crime and disorder
- (c) ensuring public safety

- (d) protection of children from harm

Under the new system:

- * A premise licence (PL) will be required where any of the above mentioned activities are carried out.
- * A personal licence will be needed by anyone who wants to allow the sale of alcohol as part of their business
- * The Local Authority (LA) will deal with the issue of licences, including the licence to allow the sale of alcohol.
- * Adults (over the age of 18) will be able to apply to the LA for a Temporary Event Notice which can cover occasional events, including those at which alcohol is to be supplied. These are limited to 5 per annum.

Most community buildings in Northumberland that currently have a PEL will be applying for a Premise Licence excluding the sale of alcohol (because they don't want to have one premises supervisor with a personal licence who is responsible for all sales of alcohol on the premises). The licence will cover the use of the hall for public entertainments and for theatre/cinema performances, as required.

In such circumstances, when an event held in the community buildings requires the supply of alcohol it must be covered by a TEN. There are limits on the number of TENs that may be given for any one premises per annum. In the early draft of the legislation that limit was 5 TENs per annum. After consultation that figure was increased to 12 per annum. This is an area that could seriously disadvantage community building management committees, local organisations using the hall and also private hirers, who will all be competing for the relatively small number of TENs allowed per annum as against the almost unlimited numbers of occasional licences available under the current system.

This is likely to result in a:

- * reduced number of social events in the village hall
- * reduced income for the village hall committee and local organisations through reduced profit from occasional bars run by them
- * reduced income for the village hall committee if the number of private and other hirers drops because of increased bar licensing difficulties.

Under the legislation local authorities are required to provide a statement of their Licensing Policy detailing how the council will fulfil the four main objectives of the 2003 Act.

The final Government Guidance for local authorities has still not been released by DCMS. Once released it will need to go before both houses for approval, then it will be six months before the new licence can be applied for and a further nine months before the system is fully in place.

Some local authorities in the country have issued their proposed policy based on the draft Guidance issued last year. Other LAs, including those in Northumberland, are awaiting the final Government Guidance.

There is genuine concern that the Licensing Act 2003 may cause problems for non-profit making organisations and charitable bodies. The Community Council, with the assistance of the local licensing departments, is arranging 2 information sessions at Alnwick and Wylam on 4th and 13th May at which time further Government Guidance should be available.

(An extended version of this article has been issued to village hall and community building management committees in Northumberland and can be viewed on the Community Council's website www.ccn.org.uk).

Building Society Help Local Trust for Austistic Children



Robert Hollinshead, Chief Executive, Newcastle Building Society & Lesley Henderson, Project Director, Toby Henderson Trust

THE TOBY HENDERSON TRUST was set up in 1999 to support children with autism and their families and carers. It offers training and advice to cover practical strategies to help children reach their true potential and also such services as 'autism friendly' haircutting, dentistry and oral hygiene. In 2001 the Trust moved into The Old Barn at The Whitehouse Farm Centre in Stannington, Northumberland and has created an interactive, multi-sensory theme throughout the building.

Pictured with Lesley Henderson, Project Director of the Toby Henderson Trust, is Robert Hollinshead, Chief Executive of Newcastle Building Society, on a visit to the Trust's premises at Stannington following a recent donation of £2,000 awarded from the Newcastle Building Society's charitable fund, which is managed by the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland.

Lesley Henderson, Project Director said, "We were immensely proud to be awarded this grant by the Newcastle Building Society in recognition of their support and confidence in our pioneering project. Plans are already underway to create a multi-sensory area at the centre to address many of the sensory imbalances experienced by our children and this very welcome grant will be fundamental in the creation of our new area."

For more information about the Toby Henderson Trust contact Lesley Henderson on 01670 789753.

For more information about the Newcastle Building Society Fund at the Community Foundation contact Lisa Cappleman, Development Manager on 0191 222 0945 or Rik Kendall, Media Relations Officer, Newcastle Building Society on 0191 244 2024.

RURAL WEST AND PONTELAND PARTNERSHIP MOVES FORWARD

THE RURAL WEST AND PONTELAND PARTNERSHIPS, part of the wider Castle Morpeth Local Strategic Partnership, continue to make progress with the appointment of consultants to lead on community consultation. With the support of the Local Strategic Partnership officer, Kevin Baxter, Regeneration Officer, Graham Bone and Assistant Director of the Community Council, Richard Powell, the chairs of the two partnerships, Sue and Kevin, and the Local Strategic Partnership chair Mr David Cowans appointed Community View Finders to the contract.

Community View Finders is a consultancy with a wide range of experience in conducting community consultation throughout the UK. Mark Patchett the director of CVF was directly involved in the consultation in the coalfield area of Castle Morpeth, from which an action plan evolved that established a programme of activities and the regeneration organisation ENERGI. The project will be coordinated by Richard Adams. Richard was a key player in the establishment of Traid Craft, a fair trade organisation established in Gateshead. Expectations run high.

Kevin Flaherty, Chair of the Ponteland Partnership, 'Our communities need to take this opportunity to tell us what they think are the issues, projects and solutions, so that together we create a plan that will give direction for the future. This plan will demonstrate to potential funders, and service providers, that we are serious and we mean business!'

The Deputy Chair for the Rural West Partnership, Sue Richardson, expressed her concern that for too long the perception of rural communities in this part of Castle Morpeth is one of affluence where there are no needs. She admits that the while the deprivation and disadvantage isn't always obvious, it, nevertheless, still exists. 'The way of life in our communities is under threat, escalating house prices, diminishing services, transport problems, ageing population, and so on, nothing new in that. What we have to do is make the people that make decisions listen to us, so that they understand what we need and not what they think we need!'

A draft report will be available for people to see via the Community Council Website after it has been agreed by the steering group on 22 March. This is not a paper to be placed on a shelf and forgotten, it is intended that it will be a

working paper, a live document to meet the changing needs facing communities.

The consultation hopes to identify a range of projects that will address the needs and aspirations of the local communities of the Rural West and Ponteland partnerships. It is important that the communities are able to engage with the process so that activity can take place on the ground and improve the quality of life for everyone. If you wish to know, more please contact either Kevin Baxter, 01670 535203, Graham Bone, 01670 535 196 or Richard Powell, 01434 607871.

The Steering group appreciate and acknowledge the support and encouragement of Northumberland Strategic Partnership in securing funds for this project. The Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast, through the Northumberland Strategic Partnership provided funding.

COMPUTERS FOR RURAL PEOPLE

COMMUNITY GROUPS, senior citizens, farming people, university students and schools have all recently benefited from the Computers for Rural People initiative run by the Arthur Rank Centre in Warwickshire (the unit which acts as a focal point for rural churches).

Appointed by the Government Disposal Services Agency to act as broker, the Centre sells refurbished, guaranteed and 'good as new' equipment at reasonable secondhand prices to rural people and organisations with limited resources.

Desktops are priced between £170 and £350 including VAT and delivery; laptops are £365. They come with Windows 98 and Office Suite 1 preinstalled.

For further information contact David Long, The Arthur Rank Centre 01295 788 242 or email davidlong49@hotmail.com.

FEDERATION OF NORTHUMBERLAND DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS (FONDT)

WHAT IS A DEVELOPMENT TRUST? What is their future in Northumberland? What are the benefits to your community of having development trust status?

A steering group formed a year ago has been working on these issues culminating in the recent FONDT conference held at Lynemouth Resource Centre. Members of the steering group include:

- * Lesley Allen, Bellingham Community Trust
- * David Brettell, North Sunderland and Seahouses Development Trust
- * Peter McIlroy, Alnwick People's Trust
- * David Milburn, Amble Development Trust
- * Rene Richardson, Holy Island of Lindisfarne Development Trust (resigned Sept 2003).

The steering group has been supported by the Community Council of Northumberland and the Development Trusts Association's Regional Development Manager, Debbie Lamb.

The steering group's work has covered five main areas:

- * Establishing structure, and working practices of the organisation
- * Securing representation for development trusts on relevant bodies, including the Board of the Northumberland Strategic Partnership
- * Lobbying for core funding for development trusts, including the Single Programme
- * Investigating the possibility of sharing services
- * Sharing information.

Definition of a Development Trust

As an organisation working with and for development trusts, one of the first tasks the steering group did was agree the definition of a development trust. Based on the Development Trusts Association definition, a development trust is an organisation which meets the following five criteria:

- * Engaged in the economic, environmental & social regeneration of a defined area or community
- * Independent and aiming for self-sufficiency
- * Not for private profit
- * Community-based and owned
- * Actively involved in partnerships between the community, voluntary, private & public sectors.

Categories of Membership

Classification of the list of different and

diverse organisations which had signed up to FONDT was undertaken by the steering group and three categories of membership were established:

- * Full - that is trusts with a clear remit and plans which are currently engaged in delivering services
- * Emerging - groups which aim to become development trusts but do not have clear plans, are not yet delivering services or fail on other parts of the five criteria.
- * Supporters - strategic and support organisations.

Representation

Even in its current unconstituted form FONDT has been approached to sit on various boards and partnerships such as the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, the Rural Network, and Berwick Local Strategic Partnership.

The future

The steering groups plans to continue its work and hopes to include representation from six "full" development trusts, two "emerging" trusts and two "supporters". Admin will be shared between the Development Trusts Association and the Community Council of Northumberland. The steering group will meet every two months and information will be circulated via the FONDT website. Volunteers for the FONDT steering group should contact the Community Council of Northumberland at the Alnwick office on 01665 606578.

Funds will be sought for a piece of work which will look at building the sustainability of development trusts and looking at opportunities for development trusts.

The website (www.fondt.org.uk) will be a useful tool for development trusts to communicate with each other.

What are the benefits of becoming a Development Trust?

Development Trusts are very visible to the government and its agencies; central government is placing increasing emphasis on Development Trusts, seeing them as key delivery agents for regeneration projects. This interest in funding for Development Trusts flows down to agencies like the Northumberland Strategic Partnership and Local Strategic Partnerships.

Development Trusts are also seen as potential hosts of social enterprises which could contract with the public sector to deliver local services.

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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