



NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY

NEWS

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

A STANDARD ACHIEVED

THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL of Northumberland has been recognised as an Investor in People after achieving the Standard on 6 June 2005.

Investors in People is the national Standard, which sets out a level of good practice for training and development of people to achieve business goals. The Standard provides a national framework for improving business performance and competitiveness, through a planned approach to setting and communicating business objectives and developing people to meet these objectives. It is based on the three key principals for people development - commitment, planning and evaluation.

For several years now the Community Council has been working towards achieving the IIP standard with the support of its staff and trustees. The commitment to develop employees to achieve business goals and targets can only come if these business goals and targets are clearly laid out, understood and agreed by all. CCN has worked to ensure the development of a clear business planning strategy that staff and trustees can understand so that people can explain how they contribute to achieving the agreed goals and targets.

Many of CCN's policies and procedures have been reviewed and in particular the appraisal and training and development procedures have been strengthened and implemented to ensure all are given equal opportunity to, and access to training that will develop the individual and the organisation.

Although many of the building blocks were already in place within the organisation it has needed a great deal of effort and hard work from all within CCN to ensure that the required standard has been met. Recognition must be given for the supportive approach from trustees and senior management and the commitment from staff who responded with enthusiasm to the requirements and changes needed. The standard has been achieved and it is now up to all within the organisation to maintain the same level of commitment that got us there in order to be ready for our review in three years time.

Congratulations to the Community Council of Northumberland on achieving the Investors in People Standard.

CHANGES ON THE RURAL FRONT

EARLY IN 2001 the rural areas of Britain were hit by Foot and Mouth Disease. Later that year, following a great deal of pain and penury for the farming community, the Government launched 3 enquiries, looking respectively at the way in which the crisis was handled, at technical issues of the disease and biosecurity, and at the future prospects for our food and farming industry.

Later, the government appointed Lord Haskins to review the way in which the Government itself, together with its departments and agencies, is organised to address the wider rural development scene: not only food and farming, but the wider economy, communities and the environment in rural areas. The Haskins Report on 'Modernising Rural Delivery' was published in Autumn 2003. It proposed a radical shake-up of rural agencies; the separation of roles and responsibilities between policy-makers and service-providers; the simplification of the plethora of rural funding streams; and the decentralisation of advisory and development services to as local a level as possible.

In March 2004, DEFRA reduced the Countryside Agency's budget, resulting in the termination of the Vital Villages grants programme for local communities, and serious doubts being placed on the future of such programmes as the Market Towns Initiative, support for rural social housing initiatives, parish plans, rural transport initiatives, and a variety of other popular and successful activities which had been established by the 2000 Rural White Paper.

The Government responded to the Haskins Report in July 2004, and at the same time up-dated some of the provisions of its original White Paper. Led by the Government Office, each English region would need to prepare a 'Regional Rural Delivery Framework', which would spell out the priorities for addressing 3 key themes: economic and social regeneration; social justice for all; and enhancing the value of the countryside. The framework would need

to harness the energy and enthusiasm of a wide variety of agencies (the local authorities, NHS, voluntary and community sector, business development bodies, etc), as well as co-ordinating the policies and activities of the 'DEFRA family' - those agencies that receive DEFRA funding each year. Some of this would require fresh legislation; some would need a significant redirection of resources; all of it would require a great deal of goodwill.

New organisations and responsibilities.

Although the legislative programme was delayed by the General Election, progress has been made to put the new organisations and structures in place, within the North East. Some of the changes include:

(1) *Countryside access, conservation and recreation:* English Nature, parts of the Countryside Agency and parts of DEFRA's Rural Development Service are merging to form Natural England. These bodies are already working closely together, and are awaiting the legislation to make the new body a legal entity, due to be up and running in October 2006. The new body will have a North East regional office.

(2) *Rural policy and proofing:* National responsibility for monitoring and advising on the rural implications of policies and programmes has moved from the Countryside Agency to the Commission for Rural Communities. The CRC will be a small national body, and there will be no regional offices.

(3) *Economic and community regeneration:* Various (but not all) aspects of economic and community regeneration have trans-

ferred from the Countryside Agency to the regional development agencies (including One North-East). These include, among others, funding the Market Towns Initiative (there are 10 MTIs in Northumberland), regional food initiatives, certain renewable energy schemes, recreational routes and waste recycling.

In due course, OneNE will also take responsibility for parts of the EU England Rural Development Programme.

(4) *Rural Social and Community Programme:* The full details have yet to be published. However, responsibility is being transferred from the Countryside Agency to the Government Office for the regions, who in turn will devolve a high level of responsibility for the delivery of

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HELPED TO CHANGE

FOR THE PAST 6 MONTHS, we in the Community Council have been working hard on a strategic review, to address a variety of aspects of our organisation: our communications, planning, governance, priorities, reporting,... and more. We have benefited from the encouragement and practical support of our colleagues, especially on the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, and from the advice of an external consultant, Peter Kemp (formerly Tynedale Council Chief Executive).

Our review will continue into the future, but here are some of the practical outcomes:

- the compilation of a whole-organisation business plan, which spells out more clearly than hitherto, our role, priorities, resources, plans and contingency provisions (contact our office for a copy)
- an improved website, which is currently under construction
- attainment of Investor in People status
- attainment of Level 1 of our national quality standards
- a revision of our senior management responsibilities, strengthening our expertise in the fields of care and social inclusion
- improvements in our in-house training for staff
- strengthening of our support for partnerships within the wider voluntary sector

Still in the pipeline are developments in our communication strategy, the operation of our committees, and refinements in our monitoring and reporting of outcomes. We are grateful for the help and encouragement which we have received in this process.

SPRING MEETING 2005

THE KNOTT MEMORIAL HALL at Heddon on the Wall was the venue for CCN's Spring Meeting this year.

CCN's President, the Duke of Northumberland, welcomed all those attending and introduced Dr David Francis, Director of CCN and the Venerable Robert Langley, Vice-Chairman of the Community Council of Northumberland's Executive Committee. The Duke informed those present that the highlight of the meeting would be a talk from Professor Neil Ward, from Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy, on the subject of Countryside Futures.

The Vice Chairman said that this had been a time of rapid change, non more so than for the Community Council, especially within the previous six months, and reported on some of the major activities occupying CCN's staff and trustees during the period. Included in these activities was a Strategic Review of CCN's activities, which was being carried out by the staff and Executive Committee. The NSP had provided a consultant to help with this Change Management Programme, helping to define what the role of the Community Council should be within these changing times. This had put great



Professor Neil Ward

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pressure upon members of the Senior Management Team and to a lesser extent, on the Executive Committee members. The commitment of the staff had been exemplary, coping with extra pressures whilst continuing to provide a first class service to communities.

Venerable Langley concluded the report by thanking some of the staff who had recently left the organisation and welcoming new staff. In particular the work of Jeff Hughes was acknowledged. Jeff, who had been CCN's Treasurer for a number of years, retired in May 2005.

Professor Neil Ward gave a presentation on Countryside Futures. Neil gave a brief resume relating to his work history and then thanked CCN for giving him the chance to come along to the Spring Meeting to give the presentation.

Neil stated that making claims about the future was fraught with risks for the scientist and the social scientist, but perspectives like this would be seen as essential to successful business performance and sound policy-making. Patrick Dixon had said, "Either we take hold of the future or the future would take hold of us". The meant staying one step ahead and in control.

Professor Ward gave examples of the State of the Countryside and issues relating to Environment unsustainability, sustainable environments, fragmentation and cohesion. He also discussed common themes of social cohesion v individualisation and concern for the environment. Scenarios were also discussed as to how the countryside could be shaped in the future. Some trends were as follows:

- Differentiated Countryside (retirement retreat, Dynamic commuter etc)
- Dynamic Rural Tomorrow
- 21st Century Good Life (tighter land use policy, dependence on city wealth)
- Consumption Countryside (end of rural separateness, etc)
- The Rise of the Rurbs (rural strategy to promote economic growth)
- 50 year Scenario-Key Trends (mobile society, growth of tourism)
- Vibrant Variety (constant rural-urban mobility, prefab living)
- Countryside for Leisure
- Gardens and Guilds (technology, craft and community)
- Fortresses and Fences (secure havens, impact of global politics, bio-terrorism etc)
- Preserved Heritage (countryside is protected as heritage)
- Backcasting (what would the scenario mean for your work?)

These trends had not delivered all of the Government's objectives. The findings were that major ethical questions about winners/losers had been raised and that rural/urban relationships were crucial to success.

Following questions from the floor John Lewis, Community Council Executive Member, gave the vote of thanks to Professor Ward. He felt that the scenarios set by Professor Ward had been very interesting, and that some of the scenarios set for the future could happen and this would be of great concern to rural and urban communities. He hoped that the Government would take stock of these trends and forecasts highlighted within the presentation.

TRAINING FOR PARISH COUNCILS

We have organised the next round of training opportunities for parish councils, as follows:

- (1) A general introduction to parish councils - covering their constitutional basis, roles powers, procedures, finances, controls and obligations.....all in 2 hours!

Wednesday 6 July 7 - 9 p.m. in the Main Hall, Cheviot Centre, Wooler

- (2) An event for new (ish) chairmen - covering the law and practice of meetings, employment issues and general management

Thursday 14 July 7 - 9 p.m. St James' Hall, Wellway, Morpeth

- (3) The Certificate in Local Council Administration - an introduction to the clerks' qualification, and some of the 'tests'. A necessary first step on the road to Quality Parish Council status.

Wednesday 20 July 7 - 9 p.m. St James Hall, Wellway, Morpeth

These details, including a booking form, are being sent to parish councils throughout our area.

At short notice, bookings can also be made by telephone.

The costs of our training events are £5 per person, which includes the cost of any distributed briefing material.

NALC is willing to organise training on a variety of other topics, where there is a demand: contact David Francis at NALC, with your training needs and suggestions.



Some of those present at CCN Spring Meeting

HONORARY ARCHITECT

OVER A PERIOD of many years now the Community Council has been able to offer to village hall and other community building management committees the services of a suitably qualified person to give general advice on the structure and condition of the hall. The various reports produced have not been detailed design statements or project management plans but have been sufficient in detail to enable numerous community centre and village hall management committees to decide on their next steps towards developing their project.

Thanks to the generosity of a number of different architects over the years these services have been provided free of charge.

Gil Jackson, our current Honorary Architect will soon be moving out of the area to be closer to his children (and grand children) further south. The Community Council is grateful for the service he has provided and is now searching for a replacement. The role of Honorary Architect would suit a recently retired and suitably qualified person who loves Northumberland and would like to put their expertise to good use. The job is honorary but out of pocket expenses and travel expenses will be paid. Please contact Alan Hedley on 01670 517178 if you think you can help. (Email address is alanhedley@ccn.org.uk).

Thanks To Volunteers

IN THE YEAR of the Volunteer Calendar, June is Recognition month, and incorporates the annual National Volunteers' Week.

Now in its 21st year, Volunteers' Week offers an opportunity to thank volunteers for the contribution they make across the UK, as well as promote volunteering generally to those who might be interested in getting involved.

But recognition for volunteers shouldn't just be a once a year occurrence, and acknowledging the contribution of volunteers can take many forms: thank you certificates for specific time periods or activities, social events for volunteers, birthday/Christmas cards, even just recording the names of volunteers in the annual report, all of these demonstrate the organisation's gratitude.

The Year of the Volunteer has produced some thank you cards, birthday cards and thank you certificates which organisations can send to their volunteers to celebrate the invaluable contributions they make within their communities. An e-card is also available throughout June. For more information, contact Vicky Crofts on 020 7643 1338, or on email at vcrofts@csv.org.uk.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

INFORMATION ON THE LICENSING ACT 2003 and its implications for community buildings was gratefully accepted by representatives of village hall management committees at two recent meetings. The events, held at the Cheviot Centre, Wooler and Wylam Institute, were organised by the Community Council of Northumberland and led by representatives from the local authority districts in Northumberland. CCN is grateful to Paddy Gasgoine, Blyth Valley, who led the Wooler event and Phil Solderquest from Tynedale Council who led the Wylam event. Thanks go also to David Wilson (Berwick), Yvonne Durham (Alnwick) and Jim Pendrich (Castle Morpeth) who supported Paddy in the question and answer session at Wooler and Tasmin Hardy (Castle Morpeth) who, along with Jim, supported Phil at the Wylam event.

Most of the village halls represented at the events currently hold a Premises Entertainment Licence (PEL) and since 7 February 2005 have been able to apply to have their PEL converted to a Premises Licence (PL). The majority of halls in Northumberland have not yet applied to convert their existing PEL. It was emphasised at both of the information events held that halls only have until 6 August 2005 to apply for that conversion. There will be no fee for the new PL which would not come into effect until a date in November, the current PEL covering the hall until then. If an application to convert has not been made by that date then if the hall requires a PL it will have to make a new application.

Should a hall wish to extend its new premises licence to cover regulated entertain-

ment not already covered by their PEL (such as film shows, theatre or indoor sporting events) then their application will need to be treated as a variation.

When a hall requires a new licence or a variation, then there is the additional requirement that they advertise this in a local newspaper circulating in the vicinity of the premises. It was suggested at the events that one way of reducing these advertising costs would be for a number of halls in the same vicinity to synchronise the submission of any variations so that they could take out a single advert covering a number of neighbouring halls.

All applications, whether conversion, variation or new, must be accompanied by a plan of the hall to a scale of 1mm to 100mm. If a hall does not have such a plan it is possible that the Fire and Rescue Service might have a copy they can make available to the hall. Thus it was suggested that before incurring the expense of having plans drawn up they contact the responsible officer (Mr S Richards) at Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, 01670 534644.

Under current arrangements halls without an alcohol licence, who wish to hold events where alcohol will be sold, will apply for an occasional licence to the magistrates court - there is no limit on the number of occasional licences they can have in a year. Under the new regime, halls that have a Premises Licence covering regulated entertainment but not the sale of alcohol will need to apply to their local authority to obtain a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) where they wish to hold an event where alcohol will be sold. These TENs will be limited to 12 per annum and issued to individuals. An individual may not apply for more than 5 per annum for any one set of premises. It was pointed out to the hall represented at the information events that because of the limit of 12 TENs per year it will be very important for halls to amend their hiring agreements, so that hirers are required to obtain the written permission of the management committee before a TEN is applied for. Halls should also note that because the licensing year runs by the calendar 2 separate TENs would be needed to cover a New Years celebration event where alcohol was sold before and after midnight.

The licensing officers from the local authority districts have been proactive in organising roadshows and helpful in their response to enquiries from the many premises that come under the new law. There is no doubt that as time passes and we get closer to the effective date the local authority staff will be inundated with applications and will not be able to spend so much time dealing with enquiries. The message to village hall committees is to ensure that they get their conversion applications in as soon as possible and before 6 August - time is indeed running out.

VOLUNTEER BRITAIN

CSV MEDIA is looking for stories about the positive impact volunteering has had on individuals and their communities for a new film, digital and audio competition, Volunteer Britain. Volunteer Britain will reward and recognise the achievements of the millions of people across the UK who give their time to do something special, from sports coaches to mentors, school governors to special constables. Entrants to the Volunteer Britain are asked to submit either a 90 second film, a 3-minute audio piece, or a 2-minute digital story about their experiences with volunteering. Successful entrants will have the chance to get their work seen or heard by thousands on the Community Channel, BBC Local Radio, or at local cinemas.

Further information can be found at www.csv.org.uk/volunteerbritain.

THE BIG LOTTERY FUND

THE BIG LOTTERY FUND was established in June 2004 to replace the Community Fund and the New Opportunities Fund with a commitment to bringing real improvements to communities, and to the lives of people most in need.

The Fund will work on three themes in delivering its new funding programmes for 2005 - 2009:

- Community learning and creating opportunity
- Promoting community safety and cohesion
- Promoting well being

One third of funding will be accounted for through demand-led programmes that fall within the overall themes laid down by the government following consultation. The level of prescription will be minimal allowing a very broad range of applicants and projects to apply.

The remaining two thirds of available funds will be distributed through a range of strategic programmes, which will allow specific policy areas to be supported in a more targeted way. This includes:

- Voluntary and community sector (£155m)
- Children's play (£155m)
- Environmental programmes (£354m)
- Well being programmes (£165m)
- International grants (£60m)

In addition the Young People's Fund (£76m) is a special programme to help young people develop projects that will make a lasting difference to them and their communities.

Not-for-profit organisations, including charities, social enterprises and co-operatives, and community led groups (geographical, cultural, common disadvantage) can apply for a grant. Schools or colleges, learning and skills councils, NHS Trusts, local authorities (including parish councils) and non-charitable organisations can not apply to the BLF.

For more information access the BLF website: www.biglottery.org.uk

HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW?

MOST COMMUNITIES struggle with the upkeep of their Village Hall and the responsibilities that come along with it. The tiny village of Ancroft was the same until the community decided to build a new Hall altogether.

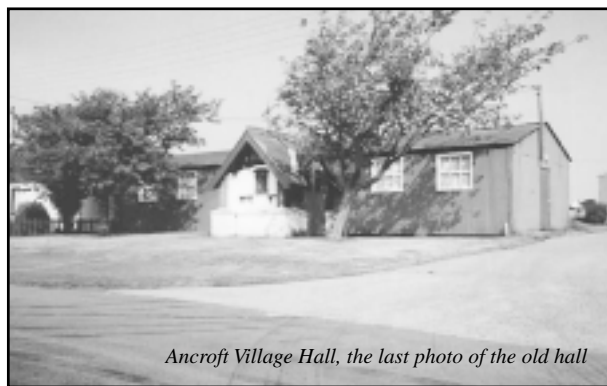
Instead of spending a lot of money on repairs, work that might lead to exposing further problems, the community voted to have the whole Hall knocked down and start again.

Quite a few Village Halls in the Berwick Borough area were built in the early 1900s, often using inexpensive materials. Most of these Village Halls were built to last a couple of generations, but nothing more. Ancroft Memorial Hall is such a Hall, built with a simple structure, using simple materials. Starting a project of extensive renovation would be madness. Building a new Village Hall would be cheaper.

During a Public Meeting in November 2003, facilitated by CCN, the community voted in favour of supporting the building of a new Village Hall. A year and a half later, the necessary funding has been secured with awards coming from DEFRA and the Northern Rock Foundation. The community had to raise £40,000 themselves, but now the project is under way.



Getting ready for a new hall



Ancroft Village Hall, the last photo of the old hall

So, if you were in Ancroft on 9 May 2005, you would have noticed a big change. Where there was once a Village Hall, there is now nothing more than an empty space. Was Ancroft Village Hall really a 'Tardis' in disguise? CCN will be closely following the developments in Ancroft and is looking forward to seeing the newly finished Village Hall some time in September this year.

Further details available from Els Nicol (Berwick Office).

MEN IN BLACK? An active or an anachronistic church?

THERE IS A POPULAR CONCEPTION which is often driven by the media of a dying or even dead church. Did you know that the church is responsible for more volunteers than any organisation in England? Churches do so much, yet are often taken for granted. The importance of faith communities is now widely recognised. The Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy states that 'they may often be the most suitable organisation to deliver community objectives'

There is a history of faith communities in Tynedale meeting to share experiences and work, but this has usually been confined to local groups, generally clustered around the District's main towns.

At a recent meeting of the Tynedale Partnership it was suggested that although the church was represented on the partnership, it was by members wearing different hats. Currently, the faith community do not have a distinct voice on the Partnership. Richard Powell working closely with the Local Strategic Partnership Officer and church leaders helped to facilitate a meeting of church leaders to:

- Help faith communities understand partnership working and in particular the work of Tynedale Local Strategic Partnership
- Identify a mechanism for appointing faith representative to sit on the Tynedale Partnership
- Raise awareness about what churches are already doing in Tynedale and how this can be enhanced in the future.

As part of this process, the Revd Graham Brownlee, Chief Executive for the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and Humber (Graham originally hails from Hexham) attended the meeting to discuss his experiences of being the Chair of an LSP in Redcar.

He stressed the contribution that faith communities make to the wider community: they are often strongest where need is greatest; are important custodians of built heritage; often responsible for bringing visitors to the area; offer social support services; are significant patrons of culture and sport; stimulate unprecedented levels of volunteering; are largely self-financing; and have an important part to play in regeneration programmes. At times in the lives of individuals they still play a pivotal role: christenings, wedding and funerals.

In the discussions that followed Rev Brownlee's presentation, it was agreed that Churches have many roles and functions within the life of the community, specifically they have a role to 'highlight' need and stand up for social justice; faith communities bring a unique perspective to any situation. It was decided that much could be gained by working together and being less parochial, by sharing resources, information and participating on joint project. It was felt that it was crucial to raise the profile of faith communities by communicating what it is 'about' and celebrating the successes. There was a real buzz about the meeting, a recognition that faith communities make an enormous contribution to their communities.

It was agreed that through the development of a 'single voice', faith communities would be better placed to be heard. The group welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues and be given an opportunity to participate in the activities of the Partnership. The group arranged a follow-up meeting not just to talk but discuss some action!

If you would like to know how you might be involved please contact Richard Powell, Community Council of Northumberland: 01434 607871 richardpowell@ccn.org.uk

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service Community Safety Academy

THE COMMUNITY SAFETY ACADEMY of Northumberland Fire & Rescue are currently providing a series of courses, in partnership with the County's High Schools, for 13 - 15 year olds who are not fully engaging with mainstream education.

The FIREworks Youth Achievement programme provided is a 10-week, day release personal development course for students, many of who are attending learning support units at Year 9/10 stage of their education. The course is aimed at young people demonstrating the following characteristics:

- Poor self esteem and low confidence
- Poor communication skills
- At risk of offending, truancy, exclusion and substance misuse
- Disaffected with mainstream education
- Low achievers at risk of disengaging
- Difficulty in social integration
- Individuals who are bullied or bullying

Structured primarily around practical Fire Service operational activities, the programme utilises the fundamental principles of discipline, leadership, teamwork and communication to develop the young person's self-esteem, confidence, motivation and mutual reliance. Included within the programme are sessions from agencies with a commitment to ensuring the young people are equipped with the necessary life skills and knowledge to assist them in making informed lifestyle choices, including:

- Drugs and Alcohol misuse (Sorted)
- Sexual health (Northumberland Care Trust)
- Youth Issues (Northumbria Police)
- Road and Vehicle Safety
- Crime and fear of crime (Northumbria Police)
- Fire Safety Education, including arson and hoax calls
- Casualty Assessment and First Aid (North East Ambulance Service)

Throughout the programme the concepts of citizenship, community awareness and individual responsibility are highlighted. The programme includes a Community Project Day where the young people choose and participate in a project, which will either contribute to the regeneration of their local social environment, or impact upon community safety.

The culmination of the programme is a graduation ceremony where the young people demonstrate the skills developed to their invited guests, and are presented with their certificates and portfolios of achievement.

Two new 10-week programmes commenced in April at Brigade Headquarters in Morpeth. The first course features pupils from Ashington and Hirst High Schools, with the second featuring pupils from Bedlington and St Benet Biscops High Schools. Both courses are due to graduate at the end of June / beginning of July.

Evaluation of the programme, which is carried out through ongoing liaison with the students, parents and schools indicate an average attendance at school improvement of 6.1%, and an average behaviour and self motivation improvement of 12% for students attending the course

For some students this course may be the stepping-stone to membership of the Young Firefighters Association, or even to a future career in the Fire & Rescue Service.

ALL CHANGE - on the move

SEVERAL of the Community Council's projects have recently moved to new offices.

North Northumberland Voluntary Action have moved from their Bondgate premises to The Centre, 27 Fenkle Street, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1HW. The telephone number remains the same 01665 605772.

Clare Wood, Community Development Officer and Colette Barker, Clayport Outreach Development Officer have moved from their previous accommodation at 24 Fenkle Street to the Centre at 27 Fenkle Street and can now be contacted on 01665 605772.

Kate Whitehead and Jean Worth with the Carer Link Project have now settled in to their new home at Bell View, 33 West Street, Belford NE70 7DP and can be contacted on 01668 219951.

REALL (Renewable Energy at Local Level) have moved from Benmar House, Morpeth to Earth Balance, West Sleekburn Farm, Bomarsund, Bedlington, NE22 7AD. Their new, telephone number is 01670 821000.

TOO SMALL FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY?

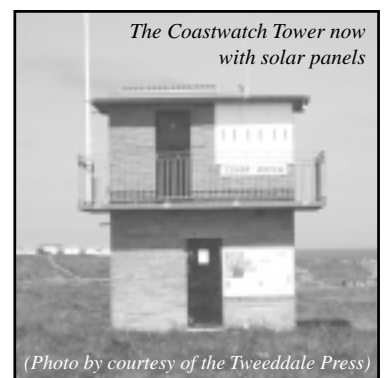
"TOO SMALL!," a group of volunteers in Berwick was told after they made an enquiry into government grant aid for a renewable energy project. The Coastwatch group desperately needed electricity in their little watch tower, to run their weather-station, their radio's, charge their mobiles and to have LIGHT!

Ground-source electricity from Scottish Power could have been an option, if it wasn't for the fact that the watchtower is situated on the outskirts of a very beautifully kept Golf Club Course! "We are not considering digging up the Golf Club Course, especially since we are at least a third of a mile away from the main power source," commented one of the group members. It would have cost them quite a bit. A Solar Panel Project seemed the best solution.

Although Green Energy is something that is keenly pursued by the Government, initiatives such as Clear Skies are not able to cope with community projects with less than an output of 0.5 kWp. Considering the group only needed 4 panels (4x 85Wp = 340Wp = 0.34kWp) they were almost 2 panels short of the required output.

Coast watch quickly decided to concentrate on localised fundraising to raise the necessary funds for the project, i.e. £4,000. CCN and REALL (Renewable Energy At Local Level) have been working hard to support this group, especially as it was considered a useful example for other groups to follow. Funding for the project was eventually secured by support from the GOLD scheme and Awards For All.

For further information or support for your project, please phone our Berwick Office or our REALL Office at Earth Balance, Bomarsund.



(Photo by courtesy of the Tweeddale Press)

RURAL VOICES NETWORK GOES LIVE

THE 25th MAY saw the formal launch of a new website - Northumberland's Rural Voices Network. Rural Voices aims to be a hub to help people share information and contacts on key rural issues and to get rural projects off the ground.

Northumberland County Council took the lead in developing and managing the project and Councillor Alan Cutter, Northumberland County Council's Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration, describes Rural Voices as "a direct result of calls for action from the rural community and rural businesses to improve networking and information in the rural areas following the Foot and Mouth Disease crisis. It is a chance to play a part in building a strong network of people committed to a better future for rural Northumberland."

The County Council was also successful in attracting additional funding from One NorthEast (via the Northumberland Strategic Partnership), The Countryside Agency and Business Link for Northumberland. This funding was secured for a two year development phase of the project which has allowed a dedicated project officer to be employed, and also covers the cost of setting up and maintaining a website for the remainder of the two year period.

It is important to note that the project is being steered by a partnership of organisations representing professionals and volunteers across the public, private, and community and voluntary sectors (including the Community Council of Northumberland).

Following extensive consultation with potential users from across the county, a specification for the site was drawn up and between January and April 2005 the site was developed and tested. The site is now live and between now and March 2006 the project officer will be encouraging and assisting those concerned with rural development to be involved with Rural Voices.

The Rural Voices website offers a Who's Who directory of organisations and people involved in economic, community, voluntary and environmental work in rural Northumberland. There is a notice board for events, news, jobs and training and it also contains details of policies, reports and research on rural issues and information about grants and other support available.

Members of the network will be able to take part in online discussions, swap ideas and information, and share good practice on issues ranging from farming and tourism to affordable housing and wind power.

John Litherland, Executive Director of NSP, speaking at the launch of Rural Voices said, "This is the perfect time to launch the Rural Voices site. Northumberland has had the

Rest for a while at Druridge Bay

STEVE LUNN, a local blacksmith artist from Red Row designed and made the recently unveiled Swan Bench at Druridge Bay Country Park. The commissioning was funded through the Countryside Agency Walking for Health Initiative (75%) with the balance coming from Druridge Bay Country Park.

A unique piece of art with a practical use. The picture was taken at the unveiling ceremony on 19 April 2005 and shows Dr Paul Morrison, Manager of Druridge Bay Country Park with Steve Lunn and Barbara King, CARAD Walking for Health Co-ordinator.



The Swan Bench

highest take up of broadband in the region. More than ever before our rural locations will have access to ICT and the opportunities this brings. Individuals and communities will be able to promote their work to a wider audience and ensure their ideas will be heard by the agencies and public bodies making decisions."

Anyone involved in rural development activities is encouraged to visit the site and have a look at the information provided. Users are able to register to receive added benefits and

Rural Voices also aims to give individuals and organisations a place to let others know about their activities and showcase any good work they have done. Users are therefore encouraged to submit any content ideas that they wish to share with others in the county.

To become a member or find out more about the Network, visit the website at www.ruralvoices.org.uk or contact John Cooper, Project Officer, Tel 01670 533 900, email John@ruralvoices.org.uk

FROM CHURCH HALL TO VILLAGE HALL



The management committee show off the newly installed windows

IT HAS TAKEN a small group of volunteers in Ingram Valley nearly 4 years to become the new Trustees of the local Church Hall, but now they are celebrating their success with their very first funding award. Money for new windows and doors has come from the GOLD scheme, which is administered centrally by CCN. What better way to compensate for all those hours of hard work!?"

Developing a Trust Deed and a Lease Agreement has given the new Village Hall Committee some headaches in the past 4 years, but support from CCN was always on hand. "CCN might not find it easy to blow its own trumpet, but without you we would not have come this far and we are very grateful for your help," was the enthusiastic response from Paul Lemeunier, the new Chairman, after the local Community Development Officer paid the group a visit. Being able to improve the Village Hall and develop a programme of activities is going to have a tremendously positive impact on this very rural community.

By taking on the lease of this Hall the group will be able to access new sources of funding. The group is confident that they can rely on the whole of the Ingram community with regard to making the Village Hall project a success. Ingram has made an important step forward and the future is looking bright.

For further information please contact Alan Hedley (Morpeth Office) or Els Nicol (Berwick Office).

W I COUNTY DAY

Northumberland Federation of Women's Institutes are celebrating "The Joys of Summer" at their county event being held at Doxford Methodist Church Centre, Cramlington on Saturday 16 July 2005.

Everyone is welcome to see the craft, food and flower exhibits, to buy cakes and other home baked goods, raffles, tombola, books, etc. and to enjoy this extra special day as we celebrate "90 Years of Extraordinary Women".

For further details please contact County Office on 0191 217 0808

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services and the allocation of funds, to each sub-region (i.e. each county area). According to local needs and priorities, this programme will support the provision across each county of: community development support, specialist advice on community buildings/village halls, social housing initiatives, community appraisals/parish plans, and parish council development; the promotion and development of a voice for the rural voluntary sector; and a grants scheme for community-led initiatives.

(5) *Providing a rural voice:* The North-East Rural Affairs Forum is being transformed into a voice for local rural interests, i.e. local communities, businesses, farmers etc. It will become a sounding board and scrutiny body, influencing the planning and delivery of policies and programmes. NERAF will also be a rural voice for the region, with direct access to DEFRA ministers, the Commission for Rural Communities and other national bodies. Previously, NERAF was a body of about 40 people, mostly the staff of big organisations and authorities. In future NERAF will be much slimmer (12-15 people), composed of people who are active in their own communities and networks.

Finding out more.

To help people learn more about all of these changes, a number of events are being organised at various venues in the North East. They are open to individuals and people from groups, businesses, agencies, authorities, etc. As well as giving an up-to-date picture of the evolving rural scene in the North-East, they will also be an opportunity to attract new people on to the re-constituted Rural Affairs Forum.

For more information about events, please contact David Francis at CCN.

WHAT WE DO

THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF NORTHUMBERLAND provides a range of advice and support services for community and voluntary groups to enable people throughout Northumberland to overcome disadvantages and improve their quality of life. These services include:

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

CCN is anxious to ensure that it effectively supports local communities and therefore operates a process of continuous evaluation. This requires feedback from our users. Any comments on services provided are not only welcomed but essential to help us to make sure that we are meeting the overall needs of users and maintaining our quality standards.

Northumberland Community News is published bi-monthly. It contains useful information on sources of advice and funding, helps to alert people to changes in legislation or service provision which may affect them, and passes on ideas and news from one community to another. Contributions and items of informative and newsworthy value are welcomed. Please get in touch with the editor at Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1PY or email items direct to alanhedley@ccn.org.uk.

Copy deadline for the next edition is Tuesday 26 July 2005.

For more information on the Community Council check out their website at www.ccn.org.uk

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