

CHANGES IN PUBLIC BODIES

RECENTLY THE GOVERNMENT has embarked on a major programme to change the shape and size of the public bodies which provide services to local areas in England. Some of the changes are now near-certainties, while others are still at the 'ideas' stage. Here, we attempt to plot the progress of some of these bodies....

1. The NHS: the Department of Health is merging a number of bodies into larger units. Strategic health authorities will reduce from 28 to 10. The number of Ambulance Trusts and primary care trusts will be halved. The i.e. grading of certain ambulance stations to paramedic status in Northumberland has also been proposed. However, contrary to earlier proposals, it now looks likely that the Northumberland Care Trust (which has a combined responsibility for NHS primary care and adult social services) will not be merged with its Tyneside neighbours. Nevertheless, it is expected that the Care Trust is still facing significant financial cutbacks, again, and we must therefore expect an impact on services.

2. Police: former Home Secretary Charles Clarke had been promoting mergers of police forces which would probably have seen the creation of a North-East region Police Authority instead of separate bodies for Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland. There appeared to be a measure of support for the proposal from the Chief Constables of Northumbria and Durham, but Cleveland has been less enthusiastic and is mounting a legal challenge to the proposal. It is not clear whether the new Home Secretary, John Reid, will push forward these changes.

3. Local Government: earlier this year the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had signalled the publication of a White Paper on Local Government in England which would lead to the replacement of England's county and district councils with new, larger unitary authorities. With the Cabinet reshuffle, the 'lead minister' David Miliband was promoted out of ODPM into DEFRA, and the responsibility for making any changes to English local government now rests with Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State of what is now the Department for Communities and Local Government.

It is now rumoured that the White Paper may not be published before the autumn. It is still likely to contain significant proposals for the devolution of local government services to a local level (as part of the Local:Vision agenda), but ministers are currently keeping quiet about the question of reorganising counties and districts.

4. Fire and Rescue: although there are no immediate plans to reorganise the service into fewer, larger bodies, work is well advanced to build a region-wide co-ordinating centre, which will be run by a newly-created company.

It is not clear whether this is the first step in creating a single, region-wide fire authority.

5. Learning and Skills Council: the Northumberland LSC is being merged with its neighbours to form a North-East LSC. New senior staff have now been appointed. The new body will have a Northumberland 'arm' but on a smaller scale than hitherto

6. Business Link: the government is looking to reorganise Business Link services so that they are delivered through larger, region-wide organisations. Responsibility for commissioning this work is moving from the DTI's Small Business Service to the Regional Development Agencies (i.e. One North East). ONE has invited tenders to provide the service on a franchise basis. Two bidders have now been short-listed to undertake this work, one of which is the Coalition of Ambition, within which the current Business Link for Northumberland organisation is a key player.

7. Rural agencies: the National Environment and Rural Communities Bill is now an Act. This provides for the creation of a new agency, Natural England, which will bring together elements from DEFRA's Rural Development Service, the Countryside Agency's Land and Recreation Service and English Nature. It also provides for the creation of the Commission for Rural Communities as a separate body (it is currently 'hosted' by the Countryside Agency, which will be dissolved following the creation of National England).

The above reforms are all being promoted by departments of central government. However, there is also a home-grown programme of reform, which will have a significant impact on local services.

8. Schools: locally, the County Council is continuing to pursue its review of the organisation of schools, with a view to replacing the existing 3-tier structure (First, Middle and High Schools) with a 2-tier structure (Primary and Secondary Schools). A legal challenge produced mixed conclusions, to the effect that the County Council were entitled to resolve in principle to move to 2-tiers, but that they should ensure that they are open to the possibility of 3-tier solutions, when each local review is carried out. Presumably, this will require some further consultation work in the first area to be reviewed, Cramlington. It is not yet clear how the capital funding will be viewed, to see through all of the refurbishment and new buildings which would be needed.

We will, of course endeavour to report and comment on these various reforms as they progress. In addition, we are currently working on the production of our long-running directory of Organisations, Resources and Services in Northumberland, the first edition of which was published in 1957. This is not just a listing of public and voluntary bodies: it is also an attempt to interpret what they do and how they inter-relate. More news in due course.....

Apologies from the Big Lottery

Regrettably the organised 3 training / information events in June which were to be led by staff from the BIG Lottery have been postponed, as the programme has not yet been launched and Big Lottery staff are unable to provide detailed application information until the date of the launch is confirmed.

Big Lottery has apologized for any inconvenience caused by these postponements and have promised alternative dates. The Community Council of Northumberland will be re-organising these events once the confirmed launch date is announced.

Big Lottery has agreed that they will write to all halls in Northumberland with the revised dates once a programme launch date is confirmed.

SPRING MEETING 2006



Some of the audience, who remained enthralled with the presentation on 19 1/2 hints, tips and ideas to boost membership, attract sponsorship and gain customers

THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND, CCN's President, welcomed the 43 friends and representatives attending CCN's Spring Meeting at Felton Village Hall on the sunny afternoon of Wednesday 3rd May.

The Ven. Robert Langley, CCN's Chairman reported that at the AGM in November he had given details of the difficult time that the Community Council was experiencing as a result of the unexpected loss of some European funding. The consequent need to reduce staff numbers and hours of work led to a revised staff structure which he explained in detail. He paid tribute to the patience and cooperation of the staff during these difficult times.

The Chairman announced that CCN's strategic review has continued, resulting in the production of a business plan addressing a number of key internal issues:

- Development and implementation of a communications strategy.
- Improvement of how CCN prioritises, measures and reports on what it does.
- More direct involvement of the Executive members in direction of the organisation.

The external activity priorities were identified as

- Support for community organisations.
- Mobilising the VCS.
- Building links with and active collaboration with the public sector.

Support for community organisations will be focused in the more rural parts of the county.

Mobilising the VCS will partly be concerned with supporting local groups to

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New funding for Castle Morpeth groups

CASTLE MORPETH Borough Council has introduced a new Community Fund for the year 2006 to 2007 for groups and individuals in Castle Morpeth.

There are 5 strands to the scheme:

Fund name	Eligible	Amounts available	Types of projects supported
Community Extra	Community / voluntary groups	Up to £10,000 (capital) Up to £1,000 (revenue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Refurbishment of community halls / community buildings * Purchase of equipment * DDA requirement works * One-off studies or designs * Environmental improvements * One-off events
Arts Extra	Community / voluntary groups	Up to £1,000 (revenue or capital)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A project working with professional artists * Match-funding towards larger projects * Commissioning of new work * Setting up a new arts group * Purchase of staging lighting/costumes for a community production
Sports Extra	Community / voluntary groups	Up to £2,500 (capital) Up to £1,000 (revenue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Start up costs * Travel costs * Match-funding towards larger projects * Cost of new equipment * Training and education courses * Professional coaching fees
Help 4U	Individuals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Help with travel costs * Help to purchase specialist sports equipment * Help to purchase arts materials * Help to purchase special kit/clothing * Help with course/training fees

Further information and application forms can be either downloaded from the CMBC website (www.castlemorpeth.gov.uk) or may be obtained by calling 01670 794796 or emailing communityfunds@castlemorpeth.gov.uk

PARISH COUNCILS AND ICT

THE PARISH COUNCIL world has been slower than principal local authorities to embrace modern ICT (Information and Communications Technology), but we are keen to catch up. This is one of the key messages in NALC's new Parish Councils' Development Programme, which is being supported financially by DEFRA.

In 2001, with the help of consultancy firm ERS Ltd, NALC conducted a survey of the availability and use of ICT by parish councils in Northumberland and Newcastle. Although two-thirds of councils responded to the questionnaire, of these, 86% of councils had clerks who had access to a computer, and in more than 60% of cases, these computers were being used only for word-processing, not for communication information, collation or research. Also, in only a small number of cases did the parish council itself provide the equipment: in other words, most parish clerks have had to provide their own ICT equipment for parish council purposes. The survey also found that the number of parish councillors who had access to ICT was fewer still.

Nevertheless, the overall picture was not one of Luddites who were resistant to change: there was a clear enthusiasm to embrace the advantages of ICT, and for those in the sector who had the necessary skills and knowledge to share this with others.

That was the picture in 2001. How has the world moved on? In recent years the Government has made hundreds of thousands of pounds available to each principal local authority to develop and implement 'e-government'. District and county councillors can now help keep abreast of council developments and decisions and government policy, and they can communicate with each other and with key staff - all by computers which have been supplied by government funding. However, although the Government's Rural White Paper more than 5 years ago promised the provision of ICT for every parish and town council, there is no sign of progress on this front - at least no government support. Nevertheless, parish councils and their clerks have made some progress. NALC's records show that 54% of council clerks have an email address, and it is noticeable that NALC's advisory services are now contacted as frequently by email as they are by telephone, both of which are considerably more frequent than postal communication.

Also, the world with which we interact has become far more focussed on ICT. Now, almost all communications from the National Association of Local Councils is by email and an extra-net system, and most of their guidance notes and publications are available electronically. In addition, access to principal local authority agendas, reports and application forms is considerably easier via their websites than it is to acquire 'hard copies'.

Within our own office at Tower Buildings, we can foresee a time when our mailings of Community News, invitations to training events, briefing notes, etc will more often be

via email than by conventional post. Already, we can more easily and cheaply email to parish councils on request, the latest NALC Legal Topic Notes or salary recommendations, than to send photocopies of this material by post.

Regrettably, parish councils are now putting themselves at a disadvantage if they are not 'e-connected'. For all of these reasons, we are keen to help parish councils to embrace ICT, while taking care to ensure that those who are less competent in ICT are not left behind. What will the project look like? NALC is arranging for the Community Council to appoint a Community Initiatives Officer who will work alongside existing CCN staff to open up the world of e-government to parish councils, to negotiate access to appropriate support and to develop ICT-based links between parish councils. But the next step will be to organise a new survey, to quantify the changes since our 2001 survey, and to identify priorities.

Watch this space.....

For more information at this stage, contact David Francis at Tower Buildings.

PARISH COUNCILS' FINANCIAL MATTERS

SEVERAL CHANGES have been introduced recently which affect parish councils' financial procedures:

1. Audit: the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 were amended in March. Among the changes are:

i. The annual income or expenditure threshold, above which a council must prepare income and expenditure accounts (rather than receipts and payments accounts), is raised from £100k to £200k.

ii. Deadlines for the audit process are being made tighter. By 2009, the deadline for a council to have approved and signed the end-of-year statement of accounts will be 30 June. Currently this deadline is 30 September.

2. VAT: where a council reimburses a councillor or member of staff for travel in their car, the council has been able to reclaim the VAT element which the individual has incurred in purchasing the fuel. This system has not changed, but there is now a requirement for the individual to provide the council with the till receipt or VAT invoice to demonstrate that the fuel has in fact been purchased and the VAT incurred.

3. Mileage rates: councils can continue to set their own rates or scales for the reimbursement of costs incurred by staff or councillors when travelling for the council. The National Joint Council has recently published new Casual User and Essential User allowances. The Casual car mileage rates for the first 8500 miles per year, are according to engine size: 451-999cc 39.7p per mile; 1000-1199cc 43.1p per mile; 1200cc or larger 54.4p per mile.

Fuller details of these new rates are available on request from NALC at Tower Buildings. Please note that these allowances are not the same as the HM Customs and Revenue tax-free mileage rates.

4. New guidance from external auditor: auditors BDO Stoy Hayward have circulated a new briefing note to parish councils in our area concerning a number of useful accounting and audit topics. Most of the material relates either to inescapable legal requirements, or to accepted good practice. However, if any council has a query about the rightness or reasonable-ness of the auditor's requests and guidance, we in NALC at Tower Buildings are happy to advise.

MARKETING YOUR HALL

THERE IS NO DENYING that the internet is becoming an increasing valuable tool for the marketing of any product and that includes letting others know about your village hall.

The 2 main ways of appearing on the net are by having your own website or appearing on a site produced by a third party.

This item is more relevant to those halls that do not yet have their own site but should still be of use to those already promoting their own site.

A simple way of setting up a website of up to 7 pages and free of charge is to use the facility provided by Northumberland Life on their website www.northumberlandlife.org

Northumberland Life is promoted by Northumberland County Council and offers a free service which provides not-for-profit organisations, community groups, clubs and local councillors that are based in Northumberland a series of different services of which one is a simple website. Even if you already have a website you can use your Northumberland Life page to point towards it.

The Community Council has a village halls section on its website. One of the pages in the village halls section lists most of the halls and community buildings in Northumberland. CCN is offering a free marketing page within this section for the listed halls. All that is required is that you complete a template, which you can download from CCN's website, and after completion return it to Alan Hedley, village halls adviser. You can view examples at www.ccn.org.uk in the services/village halls section where there are examples from Felton Village Hall, Powburn Village Hall, Norham Village Hall and the Watson Memorial Hall, Lucker.

A DAY OUT AT BEAMISH

MANY READERS will remember Bill Carr who until January this year worked for the Community Council as Assistant Director for the south-east area.

Bill has let us know that he has now landed his dream job, working at Beamish Museum.

The team that he is on covers the Garage, the Bank, the Print Shop and the Masonic Hall.

Our picture shows him in his "uniform". He says that the suit is a good fit, if a little loud.

He also has 2 other waistcoats, 2 pairs of trousers and 4 shirts (not to mention the bowler hat).



Bill Carr (in full regalia) at Beamish

Thank-yous and goodbyes... and a hello

IN THE PAST MONTH we have said farewell and good luck to 4 valued people who have moved on, having served the Community Council over a number of years.

From our executive committee, **Sheila Walker** has stood down, after 19 years of service, including a 3-year tenure as Chairman. Sheila had variously represented on CCN the Pre-School Playgroups Association and the former Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations in Northumberland, and she is also known for her involvement with the Girl Guiding movement. Latterly she played a leading role in moving forward our communications and public relations work. Although no longer a trustee, Sheila remains a Vice President of CCN.



From the Berwick area, Community Development Officer **Els Nicol** has moved from CCN to a community education post in Eyemouth, within Scottish Borders Council. In her 4 years with CCN, Els built a loyal and active network of groups and organisations all of whom appreciated her enthusiasm, care and professionalism. Parish Plans, ICT projects, childcare initiatives, village halls and disability groups have all benefited from her advice and support.

Further south, Community Development Officer **Ken Walters** has left CCN to pursue interests outside of employment. Ken joined us in 1997 and he has been exceptionally active and adaptable. During his time with CCN he has been, variously, Community Development Officer for the Glendale, Coquetdale, Alnwick and Castle Morpeth areas and the Glendale Gateway Trust Development Officer. His enthusiasm is infectious, and he has always brought creativity to his work, whether in advising community groups or solving problems in CCN.



Also leaving the staff team is **Mervyn Anthony**, manager of the REALL project for the last 3 years. Mervyn has supported a wide range of community-led renewable energy projects in Northumberland and further afield in the region, and he leaves us to pursue his own consultancy business.

So we say a big 'thank you' to Sheila, Els, Ken and Mervyn and wish them all the very best for the future.

Replacing Ken as Community Development Officer for the Castle

Morpeth area is Julie Crocker who starts work with us on 3 July and will be based in Tower Buildings.

Hello

This is to introduce myself as the new Community Development Officer in Castle Morpeth, **Julie Crocker**. I am looking forward to the exciting challenges ahead and especially meeting the different residents and agencies within the area.

My background includes working with an environmental and community charity called Groundwork in South Tyneside but due to my recent move to Ashington I wanted to work in the local area. I have been very lucky in continuing my work with Groundwork for the remaining two days a week. I have been involved in many exciting projects including fundraising for a much needed outdoor multi-use games area, a re-developed youth room and playpark and yearly holiday activities for all the family. My more recent work has included training and employment opportunities for local people. It has been really inspirational to see local residents moving forward in their lives. I have also worked as a youth worker for Raleigh International and management positions within a mental health charity called Richmond Fellowship. I also have a health background and I am very keen to get an allotment to grow some lovely veggies!



My interests include dancing and sustainability and would love to build my own timber frame house (with lots of help I hope!). In the meantime I will be moving into a new house and practicing my DIY skills while doing the samba! I hope to meet you soon.

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participate in the various partnerships that exist within these rural areas and partly through a countywide role of support with special regard to the VCS Consortium.

Building links with the public sector means creating opportunities for community and voluntary sector groups to engage with decision makers.

The Chairman concluded by emphasising the top priority of communications, with special reference to the improvements to the CCN web site, Community News and the need to improve channels of communication with voluntary and community sector as a whole.

Mrs Walker, a Vice President and trustee of the Community Council, introduced the guest speaker Mr Geoff Ramm of Mercury Marketing.

In an entertaining presentation Geoff, assisted by Aida a 6 foot skeleton, enlightened the meeting with his "19½ tips to help promotion and communication. Stressing the need for enthusiasm and ability to listen as golden rules, Mr Ramm expanded at length



on the potential use of marketing techniques by VCS groups. Geoff answered questions from those attending.

Mrs Sheila Walker gave the vote of thanks to Mr Ramm Further thanks were expressed to Mr Howard Walmsley Managing Director of Barringtons, the dry cleaning specialist, and Business Link for part sponsorship of the meeting.

Mrs Walker concluded by thanking The Duke of Northumberland, members of staff, Felton Village Hall Committee and all those attending.

DEFRA VISIT TO BRANXTON COMMUNITY

ON MONDAY 22 MAY a small delegation of DEFRA visited Branxton, a very rural community just five miles south of Cornhill on Tweed. The team from London, under the leadership of Kathleen Kelliher, had set out especially to meet with the Parish Council, Village Hall Committee and further residents of the area. CCN, who had been invited to take part too, was represented by David Francis and Els Nicol.

This visit created a great opportunity for the Remembering Flodden Project and the Village Hall to show off all the work that had happened as a result of a DEFRA grant three years ago. This grant had helped to refurbish the Village Hall and encouraged the partnership working of several groups in the village to support a programme of regeneration and sustainability of services in Branxton. The Branxton Parish Plan, finished 4 years ago with the support of CCN, was the initiation factor behind all this activity.

But most on DEFRA's mind was the opportunity to speak to local people and find out their concerns with regard to possible new government legislation on governance.

A group of representatives discussed the position of Parish Councils and the responsibilities that would come their way if local districts were to be dissolved.

The DEFRA team was especially keen to hear about how several Parish Councils are working together to make change happen and to raise a voice for the nearly forgotten rural parts of the North East. The Tri-partite Meetings in the Borough were spoken of as an example of good practice and a real way forward with regard to getting things done.

Further discussion focussed on sustainability and involving young people in Parish Planning and community life. This led to representatives highlighting the importance of micro-businesses, affordable housing and continuing grant support.

An evening session took those issues even further when other representatives of Parish Councils joined the discussion. It is to be expected that the DEFRA team went home with a lot to think about.



Eunice Hollist, Clive Hallam-Baker (Chairman of Branxton PC), Kathleen Kelliher (Leader of the Defra team), Ken Driver (Vice-chairman of Branxton PC), Mustafa Galal, Annie Cooper and Sue Adams.

MIGRANT WORKERS IN BERWICK - further cross-border working

ON 23 MARCH 2006 voluntary groups in the Berwick Borough and the Scottish Borders came together to discuss the new trend of developments with regard to migrant workers in the area.

The last few years have seen a remarkable increase in the number of people from the A8 countries coming into the area in search of work, ie. workers from countries that have recently joined the European Union such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Recent figures have shown that there are 248 migrant workers in Berwick and a further 861 in the Scottish Borders. The majority of incoming workers have managed to get a job in manufacturing, but on the whole their employment is spread over a wide range of sectors: distribution, hotels, restaurants, agriculture, fishing, construction, transport, finance and public services. Most of us welcome these developments, especially if it means getting a new dentist!

Some years ago, local businesses employed specialist agencies to help recruit foreign workers, especially for seasonal employment, but now with air travel getting cheaper and more convenient, migrant workers come independently and seek for work without the help of agencies. Edinburgh airport seems to be the main point of arrival.

Accordingly to the trend, local employers are realising the potential of foreign workers for long term employment and by doing so are encouraging them to stay. Some are now staying and this has led to implications for employment and advice services.

Migrant workers are not always informed about their rights and responsibilities. Some don't realise they should register for national insurance and that in doing so they have the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else. There is also confusion with regard to driving, car insurance, tax and accommodation.

For example, the Berwick Citizens Advice Bureau has been dealing with an increasing number of enquiries and requests for help and support from migrant workers. Most enquiries are with regard to pay issues. During the last few months the bureau assisted a number of people who have been unsure about their earnings, and by doing so helped them to claim back a total of £3,000.

It is hoped that as a result of the meeting held in Berwick, migrant workers will be given further support and advice as they come into the area, especially on first arrival. Most organisations recognise the fact that migrant workers have a lot to contribute to some of the more rural parts of Northumberland. The workers are skilled, well qualified, speak English and are keen to contribute to the community. With more migrant workers keen to settle down with their families, it is important that communities realise the potential for regeneration and make them feel welcome.

OPENING OF THE REFURBISHED RENNINGTON VILLAGE HALL

RENNINGTON VILLAGE HALL has now been transformed with a new ramp providing disabled access, inside toilets including one for the disabled, a new kitchen, windows, restored timber floor and improved heating system.



Alan Beith with members of the management committee

The hall was officially reopened by Alan Beith MP on Saturday 27 May with afternoon tea and an evening ceilidh. Mrs Wendy Swinney, Chairperson of the Hall Committee said, "The refurbishment programme had been very much a team effort, it had been a bumpy journey, lasting several years. The committee was very appreciative of the support of the local villagers whose assistance in raising sufficient funds enabled us to apply for grant funding. The Hall has now been transformed into a warm and welcoming centre that we hope will be enjoyed by many, not only in the local community but also by others from further afield, making it once again the heart of our small community. The opening day and evening was a great success and enjoyed by all who attended, the one drawback being the beautifully restored wood floor was damaged by stiletto type heels. In future we would prefer visitors to refrain from wearing them."

The Hall Committee raised a substantial amount of funds over the years from various events, not least the scarecrow event held over

August Bank Holiday. Additional funding was also awarded through DEFRA's Rural Enterprise Scheme, GOLD (Grant Opportunities for Local Development), Alnwick District Council, Rennington and Rock Parish Council, Awards for All (a Lottery Grant Scheme), Northumberland Estates, various private donations and the support of many villagers.

Photos by George Skipper



Cutting the ribbon

HAVE A LOOK AT STONEHAUGH

IN RECENT MONTHS the Stonehaugh flat pack has received considerable media coverage as the largest flat pack in the country.

This flatpack though is not a set of bedroom furniture and does not come from MFI or Ikea. The product is Stonehaugh's new village hall, a wooden building imported from Finland in a flat pack form and assembled on site. It very eco friendly and incorporates ground source heating and other energy saving design factors.

The hall is currently near completion and is well worth a visit. However you do not have to get out of your armchair to view as the Stonehaugh Community Hall management committee has set up a website that charts the progress of the building. Do visit www.stonehaugh.com and look under the "Diary" section.

The project is managed by Sustainable Buildings & Homes Ltd, who can be contacted at 0191 2368120 or through their website: www.sustainablebuildings.com

ALNWICK ROAD TRAIN

THE INAUGURAL RUN of the Alnwick Road Train took place on Friday 26th May 2006 at 11am from the Main Entrance to Alnwick Castle on Castle Square.

Alnwick Community Development Trust, through its Trading Arm, ACDT Trading Limited, has purchased the Road Train in order to encourage and assist visitors to Alnwick Castle and The Alnwick Garden to visit the town without needing to walk or bring in their cars. The Alnwick Road Train will operate between The Alnwick Garden, Alnwick Castle and the Town Centre. Passengers will be able to travel easily and quickly between The Alnwick Garden, Alnwick Castle and the Town Centre, boarding and alighting at any of the designated stops on their journey.

The service is planned to run every half hour from 10am to 4.30pm, seven days per week throughout the year. The return ticket price will be £2 Adult, £1 child and a family ticket (2 adults and up to 3 children) of £5.

In the town colours of dark blue and gold, the Alnwick Road Train will soon become a familiar site to residents and visitors. Apart from the obvious benefits to traders in the town from increased visitor numbers, the Alnwick Road Train will also create six new Driver/Guide jobs and should ease the pressure on town centre parking. The Trust believes that the Alnwick Road Train will be an eye catching visitor attraction in its own right that enhances the experience and enjoyment of visitors to Alnwick.

WAR MEMORIALS TRUST

WAR MEMORIALS are a unique aspect of our heritage and they stand at the heart of almost every community. It is estimated that there are more than 65,000 nationwide. Although we are well familiarized with war memorials being freestanding stone monuments, a closer look at our war memorials will reveal a myriad of forms varying from wall-mounted plaques to books, windows, church furniture, lichgates, buildings and even bridges. Because they are such familiar features of our towns and villages, war memorials are often taken for granted and the condition of many of them has deteriorated as a result of neglect and weathering. Worse still, many memorials have been damaged or even lost, through vandalism, theft, the closure or sale of buildings, and other property developments.

War Memorials Trust originated in the mid 1990's from rising concern about the neglect of war memorials in the UK. The Trust, which last year changed its name from Friends of War Memorials, is the only registered charity dedicated to the protection and conservation of all UK war memorials and the organisation promotes the importance of war memorials to ensure that they become an appreciated and understood part of our cultural heritage.

War Memorial Trust is the first contact for all issues related to war memorial heritage and the Trust is at the forefront of public campaigning for the preservation of these monuments. The Trust works closely with Parish Councils and other interested organizations and individuals by acting as a focal point for war memorials concerns. It provides general guidance on preservation issues, including restoration and maintenance advice, and funding assistance through several grants programmes. Indeed, advising on and grant aiding the repair and conservation of war memorials represents the core activity of the Trust's work, which has supported over 500 projects through funding allocation in excess of £350,000.

If you would like further information about War Memorials Trust's work, grants schemes or to obtain a complementary copy of our latest Bulletin, please contact:

War Memorials Trust, 4 Lower Belgrave Street

T: 020 7881 0862

E: info@warmemorials.org

Or visit their website on www.warmemorials.org

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 18th July 2006.

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

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