

NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY NEWS

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WILL OUR COUNCILS CHANGE?

NEW YEAR, NEW NAME, NEW LOGO



ON 1 JANUARY a new chapter in the life of our organisation opened, as our name changed officially from the Community Council of Northumberland to Community Action Northumberland. This change followed a widespread consultation with our members and Community News readers last summer, culminating in a formal proposal at our Annual General Meeting in November.

The new name is one of several developments that have arisen as a result of an appraisal of our role, structure, membership, procedures, performance and resources.

The change of name has been accompanied by changes in our logo, website name, email address and other natural consequences. The new logo is based on a cornerstone: an angular motif in two-tone green, pointing towards the North-East. In answering these changes, our chairman of trustees Bob Langley said, "Community Council of Northumberland has served as an excellent name for the organisation for many years but we thought it was time for a change."

There has been an ever increasing growth in the number of community organisations and the word 'council' has sometimes led to us being confused with local authorities.

We hope that the change in name will better indicate what we do, show us as being a proactive organisation, working in partnership with others, but retaining an independent status.

As we were altering our name, it was clearly appropriate to change the logo to a more modern image that reflects our location in the north and how we fit in and are central to the community and voluntary sector. We kept the colour green to show continuation with our past."

Our highly-regarded service will continue, providing a full range of advice, information, training and encouragement to community groups and voluntary organisations in Northumberland, and we will continue to work with other bodies and other sectors in the interests of local communities.

IN THE PREVIOUS EDITION of Northumberland Community News, we reported on the new Local Government White Paper, and indicated the possibility that proposals may come forward from Northumberland to reorganise the county and district councils into one or two merged unitary authorities. Here, we report on how things are taking shape.....

For the third time since the early 1990s the shape of local government in Northumberland is up for review and, as with previous reviews, the process has generated friction between the county and district councils. This is not unexpected, but is quite ironic for a white paper which is concerned with fostering harmony, co-operation and integration between the different sectors.

Both the county and the district councils submitted their proposals to government before the 25 January deadline. The County's single unitary authority would follow the current Northumberland boundary; it would merge all 7 authorities into one; local partnership work and local service planning and delivery would be undertaken through the Natural Communities network model (3 characteristic communities; and 25 belonging communities). The district councils' two unitary authority structures would divide Northumberland into a 'South-East' and a 'Rural' authority; local partnership work and local service planning and delivery would be undertaken through an adaptation of the natural communities network model, with 14 community boards in the 'rural' authority and 6 area boards in the 'south-east' authority. Following a transitional period where an additional £19m will be spent on making these changes, estimates supplied by the bidders themselves suggest that cost savings per year will amount to £17m p.a. in the single unitary proposal and £13m p.a. in the two-unitary model.

The authorities did not issue the detail of their proposals until after the submission deadline. We in CAN prepared and submitted contributions to all 7 principal authorities, setting out some principles and issues which we would like to see addressed in any proposals that were to come forward (see the insert). It is true that while some of these matters relate to the structure and role of possible unitary authorities which the Government can guarantee, other of our concerns relate to policies and attitudes which only the new council, to be elected in May 2008, can determine.

Although Northumberland is big in square miles, its population is small, and the local Council Tax base is now the smallest of all two-tier 'shire' areas. We know that H M Treasury is going to squeeze English local government even more in the years to come, creating even greater financial difficulties for what in Northumberland is already a barely viable structure. Added to this is the prospect of an expensive change in our schools system, from 3 tiers to 2 tiers, which is bound to be a burden on any new unitary authorities for some years to come. Therefore, whether we like it or not, financial considerations will have to figure prominently in determining the future of local government in Northumberland, and maybe more than in other parts of the country.

We will also be looking closely at what any reorganisation will hold in store for voluntary and community organisations around the county, including parish councils. What are the bidders saying about the VCS role (as consultees, partners or leaders?), their resourcing (including improvements in grant aid) and their support and development? And how can we ensure that whatever is promised now is honoured in the future?

(continued on page 3)

Villagers turn out for Rural West Partnership's event



Brenda Fordy-Scott, Chair of Castle Morpeth Local Strategic Partnership, leads one of the discussion groups at the RWP meeting.

DOZENS OF VILLAGERS attended an enthusiastic public meeting at Whalton Village Hall to hear the latest news from Castle Morpeth's Rural West Partnership (RWP).

Despite the forecast of bad weather, representatives from villages and parishes across the Rural West came together to discuss potential projects for the area.

The meeting, held on January 18, highlighted a number of projects that the Partnership has assisted in delivering, and the support available to community groups from Castle Morpeth Borough Council Officer Graham Bone and Community Action Northumberland's (CAN) Julie Crocker.

RWP Chair George Sanger said "We were delighted with the number of people who came along. There is a lot of enthusiasm to work together to deliver projects and share experiences and knowledge."

Led by local villagers, assisted by staff from the Borough Council and CAN, it has a key role in ensuring issues affecting the rural parts of the borough are highlighted and in delivering projects which will benefit the communities of the Rural West.

A feedback form received particularly summed up the evening "useful, informative and very welcoming. I wish all meetings were like that!"

- Anyone interested in becoming involved with the Rural West Partnership can contact Graham Bone, Senior Project Officer, by e-mail at graham.bone@castlemorpeth.gov.uk or on (01670) 794799.
- Please find Julie Crocker's details in the 'How to Contact Us' section

IT'S PARISH ELECTION TIME

DESPITE THE UNCERTAINTIES of what will happen to county and district councils in many parts of the country, the parish elections will proceed as planned on Thursday 3 May. In the absence of any indications to the contrary, the district/borough council elections will happen at the same time and in the same polling stations.

NALC - the Northumberland Association of Local Councils - is keen to see new people coming forward to stand for election. No person, no matter how long-serving on the council, has an automatic right to a place on the council: all seats are 'up for grabs'. NALC has therefore circulated a briefing paper to every parish council in Northumberland and Newcastle, to pass on to potential candidates. Due to a recent change in the law, for the first time 18-year-olds will be able to stand: the minimum age for a councillor had previously been 21. Candidates must either be on the electoral register for the parish, or live no more than 3 miles outside the parish boundary, or have their principal workplace within the parish, or otherwise occupy property within the parish.

On behalf of each parish council, the elections are organised by the Returning Officer of the local district/borough/city council, who can supply candidates with the necessary paperwork. The deadline for the delivery of nomination papers is midday on Wednesday 4 April: no late submissions are accepted. If there are more candidates than seats available, a ballot/poll will be held on 3 May; if not, the eligible candidates will be declared elected unopposed, during April. Either way, councillors take up their office on Monday 7 May.

With the Local Government White Paper and many district and county councils putting parish councils at the heart of their 'empowered communities' agenda, the role and influence of parish councils is set to grow. Now is therefore a great opportunity for people to join their local council.

For further information on the electoral process, including nomination forms, contact the relevant member of staff as follows:

Alnwick DC:	<i>Mr Mick Miller Administrative Assistant</i>	01665 510505
Berwick BC:	<i>Mrs Judith Turnbull Committee Services Officer</i>	01289 330044
Castle Morpeth BC:	<i>Miss Ann Howliston Elections Officer</i>	01670 535145
Tynedale DC:	<i>Mrs Gail Philipson Election Services Officer</i>	01434 652215
Newcastle CC:	<i>Ms Debby Frost Electoral Services Manager</i>	0191 2115190

NEW CODE ON ITS WAY

AN AMENDED CODE OF CONDUCT for council members is on its way. The current Code was introduced in 2001. Widespread consultation during 2005 has led to an amended draft, with a final phase of consultation now taking place (January to March 2007).

Key features of the new version are:

- It will apply to all public bodies (ie not a customised one for parish councils)
- A 'public service interest' will cover situations where a councillor sits on other public bodies as well, or represents the council on charities, partnerships, etc.
- A new provision for 'whistle-blowers' to disclose confidential information.

The Secretary of State will make the new code 'official' by making an Order (a statutory instrument), probably in April. All public bodies - including parish councils- will be expected to 'adopt' it within the following 6 months.

We in NALC will be discussing with district council Monitoring Officers how we can best prepare parish councils for the new code. In the meantime, we intend to reply to DCLG's consultation, in the hope of ironing-out the few uncertainties or difficulties which we believe are present in the consultation draft.

HALLMARK SCHEME

WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH or two CAN will be working closely with Tynedale Village Hall Consortium and North Northumberland Village Hall Consortium in the promotion of the ACRE hallmark Scheme. Hallmark is a standards scheme which has three levels:

- Level 1 assesses whether the hall is complying with the requirements of its charitable status
- Level 2 assesses compliance with legislative issues
- Level 3 examines the role of the hall in community and how it interacts with its users and the wider community

The Scheme has already been piloted in Somerset and has been seen to be beneficial to halls in two main ways:

- It provides funders and other organisations interested in halls with a benchmark for a well managed hall
- It gives village hall volunteers confidence that they are running the hall in the correct way.

AS more detail emerges CAN will keep village halls and similar establishments updated through our partners, the two village hall consortia, and items in Northumberland Community News and on CAN's website, www.ca-north.org.uk

Our Common Land, New Edition

THE LAW ON COMMON LAND has been thoroughly revised in the three years since the Open Spaces Society published the fifth edition of their useful little book, Our Common Land, the law and history of commons and village greens by Paul Clayden. The new, sixth, edition explains all these changes, such as the new power for the public to take action to remove unlawful works erected on commons since 28 June 2005, and the establishment of commons councils to manage the land in the wider public interest.

Parish councils may well own or manage commons or greens in your community, or get drawn into controversies about them. This book explains, in non-technical language, the history and background, and all you need to know about their law, management and the various rights there, so that you can readily become an expert in commons and greens.

The book is published at the end of January 2007 and can be purchased from the Open Spaces Society, at £19 for OSS members and £30 for non members, including post and packing. Order your copy now from OSS, 25A Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2BA, 01491 573535, or send an email to osspublications@oss.org.uk

Northumberland Village of the Year 2007

FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR Northumberland villages with a population of 5,000 and under are being called upon to enter the 2007 Calor Northumberland Village of the Year competition which is just getting underway. (The last two winners were Wingates (1995) and Allendale (1996).)

The competition is organised by Community Action Northumberland with sponsorship provided by Calor - the UK's leading supplier of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas). Entries are invited from any organisation within a village and entrants are judged on six categories covering Community Life, Business, Young People, Older People, the Environment and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Entry is through the completion of the application form which requires you to answer a number of pre-set questions for each section of the competition. Entry forms can be obtained direct from the Morpeth Office of Community Action Northumberland, tel: 01670 517178, or from their website www.ca-north.org.uk. Closing date for entries is 31 May 2007. Judging will take place in June and July.

Later in the year the overall winner in Northumberland will have the added honour of being nominated to go forward and represent the county in the prestigious Calor Village of the Year® for England competition 2007/8. This will give them the opportunity of gaining recognition at national level as well as a share of a prize fund totalling more than £36,000.

CHANGES AT THE TOP IN NALC

FOLLOWING NALC'S AGM in October, the new line-up of honorary officers is as follows:

President:	Jim Rudd
Vice President:	David Woodard
Treasurer:	Peter Basnett
Auditor:	Richard Slater
Secretary:	David Francis

Chairman of County Committee: Valerie Seddon

Vice Chairman of County Committee: David Cowans

The AGM paid special tribute to Cllr Philip Brooks (Wylam PC) who had served on the County Committee since 1978 and had been President from 1995. We all wish Philip well in his retirement from NALC.

North East War Memorials

JANET BROWN is a regular contributor to NCN on the topic of North East War Memorials. In this issue she invites us to browse the new website of the North East War Memorial's Project. Janet writes:

The North East War Memorials Project website <http://www.newmp.org.uk/> was successfully launched on November 11th 2006. Already we have added 15 memorials, either newly created, or rediscovered in cupboards or garages, or in buildings we had not previously been able to access.

The feedback on the website has been very positive especially about the level of detail, accessibility and reader friendliness. Within the first week we had over 1,000 hits from China, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA, as well the UK.

We hope that people will add to our knowledge about War Memorials. "Associates" can research information we lack, (dates of dedication, or whether a memorial has been moved or restored). Research material from individuals and Associates can be added to the website and will be acknowledged there.

We are also interested in hyperlinking with good websites from the region. Details of relevant local history/military books (Title, author, Publisher and ISBN) can be added to the appropriate files. Any one interested in working with the Project is asked to contact janet@newmp.org.uk

Help us fulfil our aim to create a massive tribute to those who have suffered through war, either because they fought, or were left to pick up the pieces.

Visual Voices Competition

DETAILS OF AN EXCITING new photography competition have been released by VONNE (Voluntary Organisations Network North East). Organised by Matt Legg, the Regional ICT Co-ordinator, the competition is open to all voluntary organisations in each of the 4 sub-regions of the North East who are invited to submit a series of up to 4 images that relate to their experience of life in the North East - essentially illustrating 'citizenship'.

These images should broadly cover one or several of the following areas of interest, (as defined by categorisation of VCS organisations areas of interest):-

Arts/Culture/Heritage; Race: Children/Families; Disability; Environment; Faith; Health; LGBT; Sport/Recreation; Worklessness.

Not sure how to get the best out of your digital camera? Matt has that cracked. A series of informal workshops will run in each of the 4 sub-regions where interested parties will be trained on the use of a basic digital camera, and receive good practice advice and support in improving and resizing images. These will be half day workshops running from 1pm to 5pm (full details of dates and venues yet to be confirmed).

The project will result in a cache of royalty free images for all VCS organisations to use promotionally. These images may also be used in the design of a calendar that will be free to all VCS organisations in the North East to print and sell as a fundraising tool.

For more details of the competition and an entry form visit <http://www.vonne.co.uk/issues/ict/trainingworkshops.htm>

The closing date for receipt of digital images is noon on 29th June 2007.

(continued from page 1)

These are concerns which will need to be explored through a close dialogue both now and over the next few years as any changes begin to take shape.

The government intends to announce its verdict on which proposals will, and will not, be taken forward to the next stage of stakeholder consultation, at the end of March. We will report further in our next edition of Northumberland Community News.

What CAN said:

Responsive services and community empowerment: we strongly support the provisions of Chapter 2 of the White Paper, which 'aim to support local government to deliver more-responsive services, extend choice and control, give individuals and community groups a real say over services, and strengthen the role citizens and communities play in shaping the places they live' (para 2.7). We very much hope to see these addressed by local government in Northumberland in the months to come, whether or not there is a re-organisation within the next few years.

Parish Councils: the Government and the White Paper are strongly supportive of parish-level councils. We will be looking very carefully at all proposals both for enhancing the role of existing parish councils and for 'filling the gaps' in the currently unparished areas. We appreciate that there are fewer opportunities, and smaller capacity, in the deeper-rural areas of Northumberland, for parish councils to take on the provision of principal authority services, compared with the towns. A 'menu approach' is therefore appropriate. All parish councils should be encouraged to influence decision-making, and some consideration should be given to how this can be achieved, including working with the smaller parish councils collectively, in their local area. We believe that there would be merit in reviewing the Northumberland Charter for Local Councils (first compiled in 1994), at an early opportunity.

Partnerships and the voluntary and community sector: a unitary authority's LSP will be the overarching strategic partnership for the area, with a sustainable community strategy setting out the strategic vision, and the LAA as the delivery plan. The VCS has an important part to play in that partnership working, both in the provision of certain public services and in providing a voice on behalf of specific needs or interests, but the VCS requires resources to do so. We wish to see how this will be translated into the business cases for local government re-organisation, and we will be anxious to ensure that a coherent approach is given to the provision of financial support for the VCS by the principal authorities, during the transitional period.

Leadership: potentially, there could be a conflict within the White Paper's provisions between, on the one hand, the enhancement of local power and responsibility and, on the other hand, the development of strong central leadership. Strategic leadership needs to be exercised within clear governance arrangements, which support the enhancement of local power and neighbourhood engagement. We will be keen to see how any proposals for reorganisation meet these objectives, within Northumberland.

Sub-regional working: the strong inter-agency working which has been achieved at a sub-regional level through the Northumberland Strategic Partnership and other mechanisms has been very successful. We are keen to ensure that the integrity of Northumberland-wide partnerships and co-operation is effectively supported by local government in this county.

Service viability: we are aware of the doubts expressed by the review bodies in the 2 reviews of Northumberland's local government structure, in 1994 and 2004, about the viability of a 'rural' unitary authority, if Northumberland were to be split into two authorities. Without a fundamental change in the Government's funding formula, we need to be persuaded that a rural-only unitary authority could afford to retain small village first/primary schools, community-based social services provision and other inherently costly local services.

Finally, we note from the DCLG guidance that local government re-organisation may be permitted in only a limited number of cases. Past surveys in Northumberland have revealed not a great deal of public enthusiasm for change. In addition, if Government funding is not forthcoming, the costs of making any changes will come at a time when local authorities are, anyway, in tight financial circumstances. Therefore, a very persuasive case will need to be made, that the cost and disruption of re-organisation will be worthwhile.

NCN welcomes contributions

Does your community group or voluntary organisation have a story to tell or news to impart that will be of interest to other community groups in Northumberland?

Each copy of Northumberland Community News contains a mixture of articles covering a wide range of subjects. Some of these items are written by Community Action staff but a good proportion come from our readership. Each issue of NCN has an open invitation, in the right hand side column of the back page, welcoming contributions and stating the deadline for contributions. The contributor of the main news item on this page responded to that invitation. Can you do the same?

JOINING IT ALL UP

COMPACT, LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT, Community Strategy - what do they all mean and how do they relate to each other? It's a challenge but, as joined-up thinking is the mantra of the day, I'll do my best.

In theory the starting point is the Community Strategy. After a series of consultation events, the countywide version is planned to be ready by April. Some of the six districts are revamping theirs, although the prospects of local government reorganisation has dampened the enthusiasm in some areas. So the Community Strategies spell out, in language people can understand, the priorities of the community. That sounds amazingly ambitious and of course it is.

The Northumberland Community Strategy might conclude that it wishes to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to make a 'reasonable living'. How that is to be achieved is the task of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This is an agreement between central government and, in Northumberland's case, a group of partners, led by the County Council, to deliver a range of improvements which the government wants and which coincide with local needs/priorities... which takes us back to the Community Strategy.

As a reward the government is offering just over £9 million to the county if all 12 of what are known as "stretch targets" are achieved within the three year period (2006-09). This is no mean task and they include: increasing the number of mothers who opt for breastfeeding; substantially reducing the death rate from circulatory disease and strokes in people below the age of 75; reducing the volume of crime; increasing the employment rate and ensuring more young people are either in education, work or training.

In addition there are a host of other outcomes ranging from increasing the numbers of volunteers, to empowering local people to have a greater say over

the local decisions which affect them. Few would complain that these goals aren't worthwhile or wouldn't contribute to making Northumberland a better place to live in. But what has this to do with voluntary and community organisations?

The answer, of course, is almost everything. There is hardly any aspect of our lives over which voluntary and community organisations do not have an impact: health, recreation, housing, crime, and employment, sport and care to list a few. So the voluntary and community sector has a vital role to play in delivering, through the LAA, the outcomes identified in the Community Strategy. It is recognised that only a small proportion of the total number of voluntary and community organisations in the county will be inclined to enter formal contracts with public bodies but their numbers are likely to grow particularly if the benefits are clear for all to see.

The ground rules for the relationship between the two sectors are set out in the Northumberland Compact which binds public bodies and the VCS to abide by a series of shared commitments about consultation, funding and good practice. The Compact aims to improve, for mutual advantage, the working relations between the two sectors. Its shared principles are embedded in the Local Area Agreement.

And, just in case you don't know what your sector is currently being called, according to government, it's the "Third Sector". More about that, next edition.

For more information or any comments please contact George Courtice
georgecourtice@ca-north.org.uk
or 01670 500817

Calverley Clinic opening in spring

... AN INTEGRATED complementary health clinic for the rural population of Northumberland: what would you like it to offer?

Calverley Clinic, a Community Interest Company, is opening at Scots' Gap in April 2007, to provide people living in rural Northumberland with access to a more affordable and local service, which integrates conventional and complementary / alternative (CAM) approaches to health care

in order to promote health and wellbeing. "We want to give people more choice as well as trying to improve access to services and information", said Kate Thick, the acupuncturist at the clinic. Calverley Clinic will accommodate a variety of other health practitioners such as an osteopath, a homeopath, a GP hypnotherapist, a nutritionist, a reflexologist and a life coach, working together as a team. There will also be facilities for physical therapy and exercise. The

Clinic will raise funds so that it can offer a sliding scale of fees. It plans an outreach service, and later hopes to undertake research and act as a resource for training.

Rural Voices, a network for rural Northumberland developed and managed by Northumberland County Council, are placing a questionnaire on their website (www.ruralvoices.org.uk) inviting your response about the kinds of complementary / alternative health services you would like at the clinic. It is a golden opportunity for all the communities of rural Northumberland to speak up about the problems they now have accessing health care and to say what kind of therapies they would like to be made available by Calverley Clinic.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AT LOCAL LEVEL

Advisory visits and feasibility work

THE NEED TO ACT to avoid climate change is becoming pressing. Community buildings can demonstrate good practice. REALL now have funds for a small number of extra advisory visits and feasibility studies for community organisations. Groups needing help with renewable energy ideas (wind/solar/hydro/wood/heat pumps) should contact Elaine Ruff at REALL on 01670 516949.



Kath Thick outside the Calverley Clinic

LEGACY OF LIFE

IN DECEMBER 2006 Sue Cansdale contacted Community Action Northumberland to seek advice on the sourcing of grants for the charity Legacy of Life. Sue tells her story:

Legacy of Life, is the small charity my husband and I formed with friends after our 22 year old daughter, Zoe, was killed in a road accident in 1998. When Zoe was about 11, she said 'If anything ever happened to me, I'd want all my spare parts used to help people have happy lives like mine'. When the unthinkable happened we remembered. This is a great comfort to us.

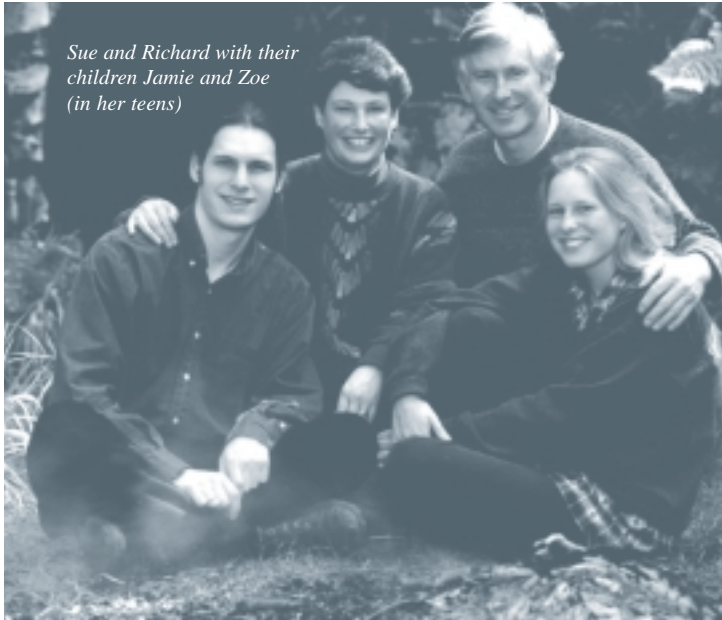
I was asked to tell my story at Transplant Study days at the Freeman Hospital. There were many speakers. Transplant surgeons talked about their work. Transplant co-ordinators told of their role. Recipients of transplanted organs spoke inspiringly of how their lives had been saved and of their deep and lasting gratitude to their donors. As I listened, I thought, 'If only other people could hear this, there would be no shortage of donors. There should be a book!'

I spent 18 months working with donor families and recipients of transplants helping them write their amazing stories of courage and hope. The members of Legacy of Life raised the money to print 1500 copies and 'Transforming Lives' was launched in September 2006.

It was a huge success. I received so many letters; one from the Department of Education and Skills, saying they thought it would be a great resource for teachers of Citizenship; one from Tony Mays, Head of School Improvement, saying he would like to distribute it to every school in Northumberland. There was even one from a prisoner at HMP Lindholme. He'd found a copy in the prison library and could not put it down. He enclosed his form for me to send to UK Transplant enrolling him on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

Legacy of Life members agreed we should try to raise £100,000 to give copies of 'Transforming Lives' to every school and hospital in UK...but where would we raise that kind of money? I spent a day in the library wading through lists of grant giving organizations. Finding the right ones could take forever.

I was told about Community Action Northumberland. I phoned



Alan Hedley and explained what we hoped to do. Could he help us? He appointed Julie Crocker to source grants which we could apply for. The day I first called to see Julie she said, 'I've just been sending you an email. We've been told about this company making a new TV programme called 'Million Pound Giveaway'. It's a bit like Dragons Den but for good causes. You might get all the money you need in one go. Yours is a very good cause. Would you be up for going on the programme?'

I thought for a moment. 'Yes, I would! If I can just get onto the programme...even if I come away empty handed...what a fantastic opportunity it to get across the message of the urgent need for more organ donors, to millions of viewers!'

With the last audition in London in two days time, there was no time to get cold feet. I just had time to buy a ticket and get down there. Thousands had applied from all over the country. The day I was there, among the hopefuls were, people with a dog, young lads in their American football gear; even half a dozen in full 15th Century armour. They passed me in the corridor, walked out through the swing doors and up Russell Square. I wondered if they were going home on public transport.

The audition went well. I was asked if I'd come on the show. I'd have one minute to make my pitch, then the 5 millionaires would ask questions. That was fine. I knew all the answers. My husband had been away at a water conference in Ghana at the time of the audition. I felt I'd like him with me. He's good at thinking on his feet and might remember points that I'd forgotten.

There were to be 5 days of filming. Ours was on Thursday, 14th December. At first we'd been told to ask for the full £100,000. Then Fevermedia, the programme producers, told us we'd have a better chance if we only asked for £45,000.

When we got to the studio they said, 'We'd be gutted if you came away with nothing. If you just ask for £20,000, we think you'd get it'. By this time we knew our figures would no longer stack up. We knew Duncan Bannatyne liked people to have done their homework. Even if they gave us £20,000 it could still take us another 8 years to raise the other £80,000. Time lost would be lives lost. But if someone wrote you a cheque for £20,000 when you weren't expecting it, you'd kiss their hand!

Drums rolled. The doors swung open. We were out on the catwalk pitching to the millionaires. 'If you were hit by a bus tonight, what would happen to your organs?'

'Thousands die waiting for organs we burn and bury every day. We have to help these people! This is our daughter, Zoe. She died in a road accident. Her heart valves transformed the lives of two little girls. Her cornea restored sight to a young man. This is a great comfort to us!'

'We want to give copies of this book to every school and hospital. Hundreds of thousands will be reached. Please help us help these people!'

We'd been warned it would be all or nothing - that was the nature of the show. But Richard had forgotten to mention a figure!

The millionaires loved the book. They really wanted to help us. They offered more than money. They offered practical support, expertise and contacts. With their help, we will be able to give 'Transforming Lives' to every school and hospital. We'll be able to make a DVD which teachers can play to their pupils as part of a debate pack. We know it will make a very real difference to some of the 8,000 people currently waiting for transplants...and we'll always be grateful to Julie Crocker and Community Action Northumberland, for giving us this chance.

Have you signed up to the NHS Organ Donor Register? Ring 0845 60 60 400 or join on line at www.uktransplant.org.uk

You are right! It is so important, I never miss an opportunity!

Sue Cansdale



Sue and Richard on the TV Programme Millionaire Give Away

County offers printing services

Northumberland County Council have recently updated their printing department and can offer a comprehensive range of printing services at comprehensive prices to voluntary organisations and community groups in Northumberland.

For more information contact Phil Maddison or Loraine Hayton on 01670 533274.

SPRING MEETING

A note for your diary:

CAN's Spring Meeting will be held at Rothbury Jubilee Institute on Thursday afternoon 10 May 2007.

After the business section, members of staff will make presentations showcasing the work of CAN.

Publication Schemes - Longer Life

A WIDE RANGE of public bodies, including parish councils, are required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to adopt and publicise a Publication Scheme, setting out what information and records they hold, which will be made available on request to members of the public. Normally, those schemes have a 4-year life, meaning that the first ones which were adopted in 2002 are now up for review and renewal. However, the Information Commissioner (the Regulator of the FOI Act) has recently confirmed an automatic extension of current Publication Schemes to 2008.

The Commissioner will issue further guidance in due course.

WHAT WE DO

Community Action 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

CAN 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@ca-north.org.uk.

Copy deadline for the next edition is Tuesday 20th March 2007.

For more information on Community Action check out their website at www.ca-north.org.uk

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