



a voice
for rural
communities

News

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CAN to host Locality Coordinator

CAN is delighted to announce we have been selected as the host for one of the county's new Locality Coordinators.

The new 'Empowering Communities' project was launched in June by Northumberland County Council, in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare Trust, designed to improve the links between health services and local community-based activities.

A key element of the project involves the recruitment of five 'Locality Coordinators,' one for each of the Local Council areas identified by Northumberland County Council. From November, the tasks of these Locality Coordinators during their initial six months are defined as:

- Build links with communities, the Voluntary & Community Sector, businesses, county council, GPs, Northumbria staff, town and parish councils, development trusts
- Work in partnership with the communities in the locality to map and mobilise the knowledge,

skills and time of individuals and the resources ('assets') within communities, develop new and existing assets, and link people to assets

- Use participatory methods with communities and wider stakeholders in that locality to find out what would strengthen those assets
- Support existing or set up new locality network(s) and forums
- Explore with communities the need for and best way of developing a county-wide directory of groups, organisations and services that includes locality specific information
- Agree with communities and other stakeholders the best approach(es) for that locality

The posts will continue until March 2021 during which time they will aim to implement the findings from the first six months and embed any good practice as far as possible.

Not for profit organisations (including the voluntary and community sector) were invited to bid to host one or more of these Locality Coordinators.



Following the bidding process, CAN is delighted to have been appointed to host the Locality Coordinator for the Castle Morpeth area, based in our office in Pegswood. Allana Mason starts at the beginning of November with a strong background in community development, most recently with the mental health service Talking Matters Northumberland.



CAN Annual General Meeting

Our AGM takes place at Longhoughton Community and Sports Centre on Tuesday 6 November. You will be able to hear the inaugural speech of our new President, Lord Curry of Kirkharle and also receive a free lunch.

Next Housing Needs survey underway shortly

As part of our work to support community-led affordable homes for those communities interested in Northumberland, CAN is funded to carry out local Housing Needs Surveys to identify specific local needs for affordable homes.

So far we have been asked to carry out three local Housing Need Surveys in separate Northumberland villages. In each case we undertook questionnaire surveys, analysed the results and produced reports for each community. Response rates to all three surveys were fantastic, ranging from a highly respectable 31% to a massive 55%.

Headline results suggest varying levels of affordable housing need in each village which cannot be met from the existing residential accommodation available. Specific needs of older people often looking to move to smaller accommodation in their communities, and younger people struggling to find

accommodation at the right price, have both been identified.

Survey for Bellingham and surrounding area

Northumberland County Council has now asked CAN to undertake a much bigger survey of housing needs in Bellingham and the surrounding area. The 'Extra Care and Supported Housing Strategy', published by the Council earlier this year, specifically identifies Bellingham as a priority location for supported housing for the elderly. The Council want to get a clearer picture of this need before determining what to do next in terms of seeking to support the development of appropriate housing.

A questionnaire has been designed which will be distributed to all households in Bellingham as well as the parishes of Bavington, Corsenside, Falstone, Greystead, Kielder, Kirkwhelpington, Otterburn,



Rochester and Tarsset. The aim is to gain a clear picture of the level and type of need which exists that could be accommodated by appropriate provision in Bellingham. The survey will also identify any specific needs in each of the surrounding parishes which will hopefully be of value if any of these communities are keen to see affordable home development.

If you would like to find out more about the survey, or if you would be interested to explore the potential for a similar survey in your community, please get in touch at info@ca-north.org.uk

First Community-led Housing scheme on site



It's just one home, but our first new affordable home, developed and managed by a local community, is now under construction.

Hardware House in the Market Square at Haltwhistle is owned by local development trust, Haltwhistle Partnership. Already substantially converted to create a ground floor retail unit and 4 upstairs flats, the rear section of the building lay vacant. Haltwhistle Partnership wanted to turn this space into a

one-bedroom maisonette, split over two floors. Through our community-led housing initiative, 'Communities CAN', we supported the Partnership to secure a £50,000 grant from Northumberland County Council's Community Housing Fund to enable the refurbishment to take place.

Following a clear out of rubbish from the building, October has seen the removal of partition walls, complete replacement of rotten joists and floorboards as well as installation of wall ties to ensure the building has a long future.

Works are expected to be complete by January after which the maisonette will be let to a local tenant at an affordable rent. Importantly, all tenants of the building are selected according to a local lettings policy which will ensure they have strong family and/or employment links

to this part of Northumberland. Ownership and management of the property will be carried out by Haltwhistle Partnership – a local charity whose objectives are to meet local needs.

For Haltwhistle Partnership this is a really important project which will meet local housing needs as well as increase the income generated for the Partnership to reinvest into other economic and social regeneration activities in the area.

There are a growing number of other community-led housing projects at various stages of design around the county so watch this space for more news.

If you are interested in finding out more about community-led housing and how it could benefit your community please get in touch at info@ca-north.org.uk

Rural Connect is back!

CAN is delighted to announce the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) has provided funding to enable Rural Connect to once again be supported.

Rural Connect provides a network for over 30 separate rural enterprise hubs around rural Northumberland, Durham and the fringes of Tyne & Wear. This enables joint promotion to take place, networking and sharing of good practice across the hubs. Critically, Rural Connect also offers a simple interface for the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and other business support providers with a network which reaches deep into the rural North East. This offers a clear opportunity to communicate the various forms of business

support available to the hubs, their tenants and businesses within their wider networks.

Funds from the Rural Growth Network and the Prince's Countryside Fund enabled the establishment and development of Rural Connect through to 2017. The North East Enterprise Network Ltd (NEEAL) led this development, providing direct marketing support to the network and utilised CAN to provide overall management, facilitate networking and sharing good practice.

The new funding from NELEP initially covers the period up to March 2019 but provides the opportunity for this to be renewed

annually, subject to performance.

This is great news for the hubs which provide important centres, not only for their tenants, but in many cases for many businesses from their surrounding areas.

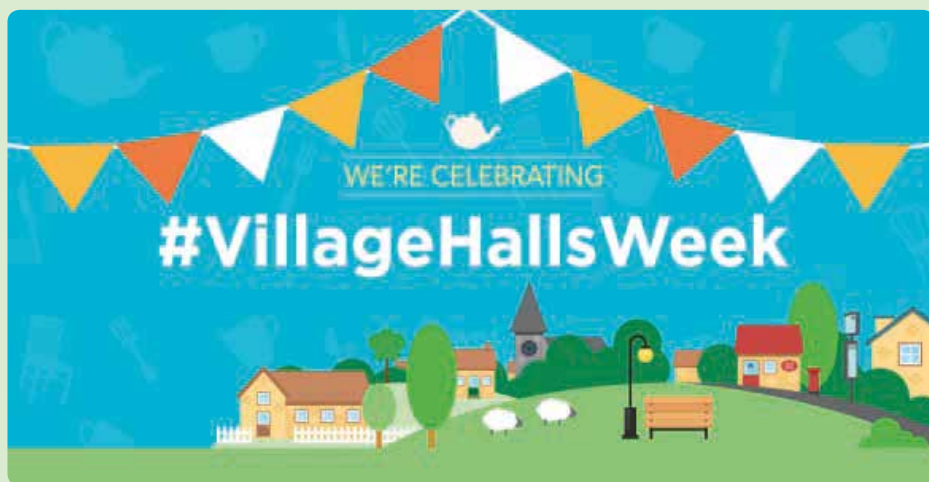
You can find out more about Rural Connect via www.ruralconnect.biz



**rural
connect**

network & grow your business

Get ready to celebrate #villagehallsweek in 2019!



Northumberland's village halls joined together earlier this year to celebrate the first ever national #VillageHallsWeek, in January 2018, to highlight the vital role they play in sustaining rural communities. And we're gearing up again to make it an even bigger success from **Tuesday 22nd - Monday 28th January 2019.**

The week-long celebration, organised by ACRE Network, England's largest network of rural community support organisations, was to say a collective "thank you" to all volunteers who work tirelessly to keep community buildings and

village halls open for the benefit of local residents. A wide range of events were held across Northumberland to celebrate the week, ranging from coffee mornings, an energy saving roadshow and a job fair helping local people get back into work.

CAN is looking forward to celebrating #VillageHallsWeek in 2019, to make it an even bigger success. So put the dates in your diary and get in touch with Louise Currie if you'd like your village hall to be involved - louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk

Why not use the opportunity this January, to host your own Village Hall event or activity? Whatever

you choose to do to celebrate #VillageHallsWeek 2019, let CAN know, and we would be delighted to help you to spread the word.

SAVE THE DATE

CAN is planning our own #VillageHallsWeek event on **Wednesday 23rd January 2019, at 10.30am in Stannington Village Hall** (next to the Ridley Arms) to acknowledge all the hardworking, dedicated trustees who manage halls and community buildings across Northumberland.

As part of the event, we would like to showcase the heritage of village halls and the huge contribution they make to rural communities. We are aware that many of you have already delved into the history of your hall/village – perhaps you would like to put up a display at the event in January?

Look out for further details of the event and how to get involved in the next few weeks.

Breamish Hall, Powburn working towards Hallmark 3 status



Doreen, Secretary of Breamish Hall has shared her experience of working towards Hallmark status for Breamish Hall in Powburn, Northumberland. ACRE Hallmark is a quality standard scheme for the management of community buildings/village halls and has been in operation in Northumberland since 2008, managed by Louise Currie at CAN.

"When we started to look at Hallmark 3 back in January this year we realised straight away we would not meet the 'Clean, tidy

approach to the hall' criteria as our car park was in a very poor condition. It had a partial asphalt surface with deep potholes and raised ironwork with no markings. The overflow parking consisted of a gravel surface which people were reluctant to park on, consequently people parked haphazardly and did not make best use of the space available. The whole thing was a health and safety hazard and the committee decided it had to something about it.

We obtained three quotes and decided to go with North East

Concrete at a cost of £22,742.40. This was a considerable sum to raise so we set ourselves the task of writing to various trusts to obtain funding. We prepared letters to various trusts and the committee decided to commit £2,500 from our own funds. At the same time as we issued the letters we were made aware of a funding fair in Newbiggin. In March, armed with our letters we made arrangements to speak to various funders. Whilst not everyone we spoke to could help with capital projects such as the carpark some trusts said they may be able to help us with items for the hall.

The main surprise of the day was the Big Lottery. We went to listen to their talk about funding, not expecting much as we knew from past experience that the process was difficult and time consuming. To our delight their representative advised us that the process had changed because they wanted to reach smaller charities where the benefits of a grant would have significant results for the local community. All the process involved was ringing the local adviser up and explaining what we wanted. She was very nice and friendly and asked us to consider what else we could do to improve the hall.

We quickly got our heads together and put together a 'wish list' of things we wanted for the hall. This consisted of a refurbished carpark, suspended ceilings in both halls with integrated lights, decorating of main hall including floor sanding, blinds throughout the hall, six new tables,

Training for village halls and community buildings – booking closes soon



CAN has organised a series of training events aimed at trustees/management committee members of village halls and community buildings. The training programme is listed below. You can find out more details about each course by

going to <http://ca-north.org.uk/news/training-courses-for-village-hall-reps>

COURSE DATE LOCATION

Risk Assessment & Insurance
12 November Pegswood

The Hallmark Quality Standard
13 November Pegswood

Trustee Responsibility (& liability)
20 November Newton

Trustee Responsibility (& liability)
21 November Powburn

Health & Safety in Community Buildings

27 November Powburn

Health & Safety in Community Buildings

28 November Newton

Prices are subsidised for members of the West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium and the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium. Places are strictly limited so the advice is to book as soon as possible.

a wheelchair ramp and an external noticeboard. The adviser came out in May this year and looked at our request, asked us questions and told us she would put it to her team and if they had no further questions it would go to the regional board for consideration.

To our delight, as a result of all our efforts, we were granted:

- £500 from the Carr-Ellison Family Trust
- £2,000 from National Parks
- £2,000 from Wendy Pattinson, our County Councillor
- £25,000 from the Big Lottery
- £900 from the Rothley Trust to purchase a projector and install sensor lights in our toilets and LEDs in the kitchen, corridor and office.
- £2,500 from our own funds as a result of holding fundraising events.

In total we had £32,900 to spend.

As the carpark was time critical having to be completed before October because of the weather, we immediately set up a sub-committee of three to project manage all the works required. We received final notification of the Big Lottery award on 3/7/18 and started work on 4/7/18. Trying to manage all of these works around our user groups, to cause minimal disruption, was logistically

quite difficult. We are quite proud of the fact we only had to cancel one class. We also had to factor our own holidays into the equation as well.

I cannot deny there were not some tense times as we had set ourselves a completion date of 25/8/18, when we had arranged for a celebratory evening with the duo Marty Craggs and Trevor Sewell. Remarkably everything came together, despite a few hitches along the way, with the blinds being installed just the day before. All the painting of the main hall, corridor and toilets was carried out by members of the local community. I have to say we were all rather tired at this point!

The difference to The Breamish Hall is amazing, the car park is now much bigger with allocated bays, people are now parking considerately and it is no longer a health and safety hazard. The main hall looks like a new room, it is so bright and light. We are currently planning to have a mural on one of the walls done by a local artist. The LEDs will mean our electricity usage should come down and the toilet sensors mean we are no longer constantly checking the toilets to see if the lights have been left on.

We have still to purchase the 6 tables, external noticeboard and wheelchair ramp as we have been waiting for all of the funding to go into our bank account. All of our user groups are delighted with the results as are the members of our local community. We have moved our Warm Hub event

into the main hall and everyone agrees it is much nicer, it is easier to move around and feels much less cramped.

When we set out on this project in January 2018 we had no idea we would achieve so much in such a short space of time. It is thanks to our funders, the local community and the Breamish Hall committee that we have made this happen. It just goes to show what you can do when you all work together and put your minds to it!"

Do you need extra support or help in managing your village hall?

We can help! Since 1951 CAN has offered advice for village halls, and Louise Currie our village hall adviser has over 12 years' experience in helping trustees.

Village halls, church halls and other community buildings remain a vital resource at the heart of many rural communities, acting as a hub for multiple local services and hosting community enterprises.

CAN is able to offer support to those community buildings which are seeking to become more enterprising in serving their local community. For more details or to discuss your needs, contact Louise by calling 01670 517178 or drop her an email at louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk

Council Jottings



Our regular update from Stephen Rickitt, Chief Officer at NALC Northumberland Association of Rural Councils.

- NALC held their AGM at The Sill on 29 September where there was a useful discussion on the opportunities arising from the Borderlands Growth Initiative. Members see the Initiative as being an exciting way of attracting investment into the area, particularly when coupled with the North of Tyne Devolution Deal.

- Recent training I've delivered included a series of briefings on Highways and Public Rights of Way. at three venues where a variety of issues were explored.

- Bookings are currently open for briefings I'm delivering, on updating & introductions to local council

powers and procedures. Further briefings are in the course of preparation. Booking details have been circulated to all Member Councils.

- The first round of audits for councils with turnovers below £25k is coming to an end. Nearly all those Councils have taken advantage of the new exemption process, meaning that an external firm of auditors no longer carries out a limited assurance review. A number of common themes have emerged and we have asked the national NALC for a "Lessons-Learned" briefing.

Three years as CEO – a reflection

By Andy Dean, CEO of CAN

Back in the autumn of 2015, after 3 months as Chief Exec at CAN, I offered a few reflections on the opportunities and challenges going forward. After a further 3 years in the role, it is interesting to reflect again on these words. Back in 2015 I said:

“Leading CAN in its role to support the rural communities of Northumberland is a great privilege. Creative staff, progressive trustees and CAN’s track record stretching back to the 1950s provide fantastic building blocks.

“The environment, of course, is hugely challenging. Shrinking public finances and the inevitable service reductions which ensue are presenting challenges to rural areas more than any other. Having worked in Northumberland wearing various hats for over 20 years, there has certainly never been a time quite like this.

“However, Northumberland and CAN have much to build on. The connection between people and their environment is palpable in Northumberland and the spirit of enterprise and self-help is strong. There is a genuine passion coursing through Northumberland, not only to protect what is valued, but to capitalise on strengths, innovate and create truly sustainable communities.”

The first of these paragraphs absolutely holds true. The CAN staff team, augmented recently by our Energy Advisor and Work Coaches, are truly brilliant. Knowledgeable, passionate and focussed on making a difference, I couldn’t ask for more. CAN’s trustees too are 100 per cent committed to our objectives, always supportive and providing a robust challenge to make sure we remain focussed on why we exist – to meet the needs of Northumberland’s communities.

The second paragraph is also true except, of course, we can add more challenges to the list

we faced in 2015 – not least the uncertain impact of Brexit.

As for the third paragraph, after three years I wouldn’t change a word.

CAN has come a long way in three years. We have diversified our income streams and returned to financial viability, making a small annual surplus since 2016. We have enhanced our staff capacity by increasing the hours of existing staff where possible and taking on additional seconded and contracted staff. We have built on the things we are good at and developed fantastic new activities to meet local needs.

My five key learning points

Personally, I have learnt a great deal as well as confirming a number of previous lessons. If I was pushed to highlight 5 key learning points these would be:

1. Good relationships are the key to anything positive.

Trust has to be earned but it is a powerful commodity. Whether it is between staff and trustees or between CAN and other organisations, positive relationships are fundamental to making a sustained difference.

2. Regardless of the organisation it is the people that make it what it is.

Get the right people, release their strengths and support creativity (and challenge) and success is highly likely – as long as you are well organised.

3. Small scale sustainability always trumps large scale, short-lived projects.

We have all seen large scale, time limited initiatives come and go. Often these can actually undermine existing local initiatives rather than build on them and support their sustainability. That doesn’t mean that coordinating a range of more local projects and activities isn’t a good idea. That is just what we have done with a number of our activities such as Warm Hubs, village hall/community building support and Community-led

Housing. However, whilst using our coordinating role to promote additional activity and access more resources, in every case we are supporting local organisations and people to deliver.

4. Charities must maintain a firm focus on their objectives in everything they do.

This can be difficult given the pressures to generate income and maintain organisational viability - this goes for public sector organisations and private businesses too. I would argue that keeping a close eye on the ‘core business’ is essential in maintaining the purpose of any organisation. Stray from this and the purpose of the organisation’s existence disappears.

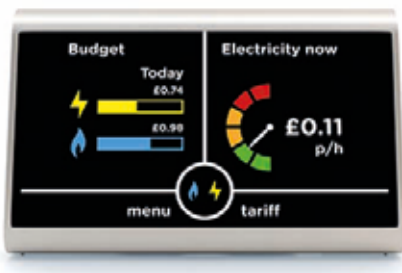
5. Keep smiling.

This may sound a little flippant but everyone needs and deserves to enjoy what they do. That’s when we are at our best and when we achieve the most. This can often feel difficult when so many circumstances and events are beyond our control. However, as a charity working for others it is, perhaps, easier to smile when we see the real impact of our efforts.



Andy Dean
Chief Executive of CAN
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Smart Meters



The government has called on energy companies to replace all old-style gas and electricity meters with smart meters. Smart meters measure your exact gas and electricity use and then send all the information back to your energy supplier, without the need for someone to come and take your meter readings.

The official national smart meter roll-out began in 2016 and will finish in 2020. The smart meter infrastructure went live across the UK, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) confirmed, in November 2016.

By June 2018, energy suppliers had installed more than 12 million smart meters in homes in Britain. But the large energy firms need to install more than 50 million meters in people's homes in total.

The government revealed that meters were installed at a slower rate in early 2018, than at the end of 2017. But the figures up to June 2018 show the pace is increasing again. In fact, 18% more smart meters were installed between March and June 2018 than the same period a year earlier.

Once fitted, smart meters will send information about your energy use to a central data body called the Data and Communications Company (DCC). The DCC's wireless network will then link each home's smart meter with their supplier, network operators and energy-service companies.

However, many energy companies are still installing smart meters (1st generation) that aren't fully compatible with the network; these are known as SMETS1 (Smart Meter Equipment Technical Specification) meters. If you have one of these meters and you switch energy supplier, it may revert back to being 'dumb', and you'll have to take meter readings again. If you have a SMETS1 smart meter and you switch supplier, your smart meter may revert back to being 'dumb'.

Suppliers can continue to install these SMETS1 meters until 5 October 2018. This is the 'end date' for SMETS1 installations, although energy regulator Ofgem is allowing 12 suppliers to continue installing them beyond this deadline to help them transfer smoothly to installing SMETS2 meters. This includes British Gas, Eon, First Utility, Npower, Ovo, Scottish Power and Utility Warehouse. The 'end date' was pushed back three months (originally it was 13 July 2018). The government said this was because 'no large energy supplier will be able to complete the transition by July without significant risk', including 'issues remaining with some meters', and 'insufficient time' to find and resolve them. It said 'consumers would bear the consequences'.

The government began consulting in July on plans to allow suppliers another two months to install SMETS1 meters. If the plans go ahead, this would mean suppliers could continue to install them until 5 December 2018. Those companies with permission to install later would have until 15 March 2019. Firms would also be permitted to install SMETS1 prepayment energy meters until 15 March.

SMETS2 meters will be fully compatible with the network. BEIS said that, with the smart meter data and communications network live, 'energy suppliers can start rolling out the next generation of smart meters, putting households and businesses in control of their energy use'. We'll be keeping an eye on what this means for you when suppliers start installing SMETS2 meters – expected early to mid-2018, depending on the supplier.

If you have a first generation smart meter fitted you can change free of charge to the new 2nd generation if you switch suppliers. If you don't have a smart meter and are considering having one fitted why not wait until next year when the SMETS2 (2nd generation) are available.

If you'd like further advice on all things energy related, contact Steve Forster, our Energy Advisor at CAN on 0779 1369625 or email steveforster@ca-north.org.uk

(Sources includes BEIS and Which)

New ECO scheme plans

ECO (Energy Company Obligation) Flex has already allowed Northumberland County Council to combine different funding streams helping households to get the most benefit from current energy grant funded projects. The council's Statement of Intent for ECO Flex has helped households to qualify for fully funded gas connections where they also qualify for first time gas central heating systems through the Warm Homes Fund. We hope

that it will also help to fund insulation measures in these properties where required.

The current Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme ended on 30th September 2018. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has decided to begin a new ECO3 scheme starting after 1st October 2018, to run until 31st March 2022. NCC will be reviewing their Statement of Intent to maximise the impact of future bids



for the Warm Homes Fund.

[https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Business Grants%20and%20funding/Northumberland-Statement-of-Intent-v1-08-02-2018.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Business%20Grants%20and%20funding/Northumberland-Statement-of-Intent-v1-08-02-2018.pdf)

New energy efficiency measures to target rural households

The government has set out new policy on energy efficiency in response to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO3) consultation for the new scheme which will run from autumn 2018 until March 2022. ECO is a government energy efficiency scheme in Great Britain to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty.

To protect rural households, the government will require suppliers to meet at least 15% of their obligation by delivering measures in rural areas. To strengthen the scheme's link to the Fuel Poverty Strategy further, the government will also provide an uplift for measures delivered to low income households living in F and G rated properties under the Flexible Eligibility part of the scheme. Given landlords' responsibilities under the Private Rented Sector Minimum Standard Regulations, the government will limit the use of ECO in certain circumstances so that landlords do not use it to meet their basic requirements.

The scheme's other main policies include:

- focusing the entire scheme to support low income, vulnerable

and fuel poor households

- reducing the current supplier obligation threshold of 250,000 customer accounts (or equivalent) for the scheme, in a phased way, to 150,000 customer accounts (or equivalent) from 2020
- requiring 15% of measures to be delivered to rural homes
- increasing the proportion of the scheme that can be delivered under local authority flexible eligibility to 25%
- allowing up to 10% of a suppliers' obligation to be met through the delivery of new, innovative products
- supporting households that have a broken heating system by allowing the equivalent of 35,000 broken heating systems to be replaced per year

- encouraging a multiple measure approach by allowing the replacement of inefficient heating systems to be replaced (outside of the broken heating system cap) if they are installed alongside insulation

- requiring the equivalent of at least 17,000 solid walled homes to be treated per year, either through solid wall insulation, or using a combination of other technologies (if equivalent savings can be achieved in the property)

(source gov.uk)

Further details can be found by following the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/energy-company-obligation-eco3-2018-to-2022>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727065/Energy_Company_Obligation_ECO3_2018-2022.pdf



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Big Lottery to change name

You will have noticed that the Big Lottery Fund has changed its funding arrangements this year and is implementing a more engaged approach to the way it interacts with applicants to its various programmes. This is great news and we know a number of village halls and other organisations across Northumberland are actively working to take advantage of this new approach and access funds.

The Big Lottery Fund, the UK's largest funder of charities, is also going to be changing its name in the new year to the National Lottery Community Fund. You can read more about the reasons for this name change here.



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