



a voice
for rural
communities

News

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CAN Spring Health Conference – Booking Open

Each year, CAN organises a conference focussing on a critical issue facing rural Northumberland. Two years ago we looked at deprivation in a rural context and last year attempted to dive into the complex issue of transport. This year the conference will focus on health – the key issues viewed from a strategic perspective and local solutions, both existing and potential.

Health emerged from a 2017 national survey of rural residents as the issue of highest concern and is the subject of continuing debate at national and more local levels.

Our president, Lord Curry of Kirkharkle, will chair the conference and we have secured a range of speakers from Northumberland Public Health, the County Council and local initiatives as well short presentations from external speakers to initiate discussion on possible new approaches such as social prescribing.

The Conference will take place on Tuesday 12 June starting with a buffet lunch and include plenty of time for discussion. We want to make sure we focus on solutions as much as



the key issues so that we can all work on how to make a difference as we go forward.

The venue is St Mary's Hall at St Mary's Park, Stannington. This is a new village hall venue, provided as part of the new housing development on this site.

The conference is kindly being sponsored by 0800 Repair.



Places at the conference are free and booking is now OPEN.

You can view more details and book your place via this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/can-spring-conference-2018-tickets-45285684702>



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Community-led housing hub formally set up for Northumberland



With funding support from Northumberland County Council's allocation of the Community Housing Fund, 'Communities CAN' was formally established in February this year.

Communities CAN is a hub offering support to community groups and organisations across Northumberland who are interested in becoming more directly involved in the provision and management of affordable homes in their communities – 'Community-led Housing' (see panel for a fuller description.)

This support can include carrying out local Housing Need Surveys to establish exactly what affordable

homes are needed, brokering partnerships with developers and Housing Associations, helping to establish new local housing vehicles, assessing scheme viability, exploring site options and accessing the all important funding which is needed to make things happen.

Communities CAN is also engaging with local landowners and developers to identify possible site opportunities which match with communities looking to either develop new schemes or

convert existing property.

Communities CAN is only working in locations where invited by local communities. A dedicated website will be available later this year but in the meantime, if you would like to discuss the potential for community-led housing in more detail in any way please just get in touch either by emailing info@ca-north.org.uk or ringing the CAN office on 01670 517178.

What is community-led housing?

Community-led housing schemes have six main features:

- They put **local communities in the driving seat**. You decide where homes are built, what they look like and who occupies them; you create community assets which can generate income for your town or village which can be used to support other local priorities
- **They are usually small scale** - most developments are less than 10 homes and some are much smaller. No two developments are the same.
- Although most schemes are usually **set up and run by local people in their own communities**, many are also supported by housing associations, local authorities or regional and national organisations
- They provide **genuinely affordable homes for rent, shared ownership, sale or self-build** on sites that are often difficult or even impossible for mainstream housing providers to develop
- **Schemes meet long-term local housing needs**, by the community exercising full control over how and where the homes are provided and retaining a legal and/or financial interest in them, ensuring they will always be available to local people who need them and at a price they can afford
- Community-led housing is **not for profit, involving considerable voluntary effort** from those who decide to become involved. It's an effort that several hundred communities across the country have already made, with many successful developments initiated by Parish Councils.

Community-led Housing conference for the North East



The Nationwide Foundation is funding a series of events around the country aimed at raising the profile and understanding of Community-led Housing. These events, coordinated through the ACRE network, are particularly aimed at parish and local authority councillors, planning and housing officers, land agents, consultants and community organisations operating in rural areas.

The objective is to increase the understanding of community-led housing as a mechanism for achieving the provision of sustainable affordable homes which are available in perpetuity for people with a strong local connection to the relevant community.

Community-led housing is all about putting the local community in the driving seat and the conference will explain how this can be achieved in more detail, utilising local examples of where it has already been done.

The North East event is doubling up as the launch of a new strategy for community-led housing covering the entire region. This strategy will contain a number of ambitions aimed at influencing policy makers and fund holders to help more local communities get involved.

The event takes place at the Sjøvoll Centre near Durham on **Wednesday 20 June**. Booking will open shortly. If you might be interested in attending this free event, you can register your interest with CAN and we will forward the link to booking details when these are available.



Councillor John Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing & Resilience from Northumberland County Council with Andy Dean, Chief Executive of CAN

CAN and West Northumberland Village Halls Consortium partnership

By Sarah Hallberg,
Consortium secretary

In October 2017 I took over the position of Secretary to the West Northumberland Village Halls Consortium (WNVHC), following Adrian Hinchcliffe's retirement after ten years of sterling service. As luck would have it, I stepped into the WNVHC role at a point in time where the management and administrative functions of the Consortium were changing significantly, in the form of a fledgling partnership with CAN.

Initially undertaken as a response to a lack of volunteers from within the committees of the 64 halls that currently make up WNVHC's membership, in fact this partnership is already proving to hold significant benefits for both WNVHC and CAN.

The main benefits for WNVHC include access to expert, independent advice on a huge range of subjects and on legislative changes that will affect the Consortium and its member halls; CAN also provide an administrative function, dealing with membership renewals, maintenance of accurate

records, help with the production of newsletters and bulletins for our members, and secretarial minuting functions for meetings.

Two things we will be working closely on in the near future, are the potential training needs for our members, and the question of our website and IT – about which a questionnaire will be circulated in the near future, to help us identify how our members use the website currently and what they would like, want and need to see from it in the future.

In the months we have been in partnership with CAN, it has been very much a case of working together to see how the arrangement can best suit both our needs – and certainly, from my point of view, CAN have been invaluable in a huge number of areas. Particular thanks must go to Louise Currie (CAN's Village Halls adviser), who has put up with numerous phone calls as I get to grips with what is required!



Tarsset Village Hall is a member of the consortium

Village Halls and Data Protection

You may already know there are new data protection regulations coming into force from May 25th 2018. These regulations will replace the current EU Data Protection Directive, EU member states regulations and the UK data Protection Act of 1998. This means that there will be more stringent penalties than contained in existing Regulations and they will apply to all organisations that process personal data of individuals.

How will this affect halls?

People managing halls are defined under the legislation as 'Data Controllers' and therefore will need to be aware of how the legislation applies to them. Trustees will need to carefully

consider how they handle personal data: how they collect it, store it, use it and how long they keep it.

For most village halls, the risk of breach is low, **provided** that any personal data is held securely, is only used for the legitimate purpose for which it was collected and is disposed of when it is no longer required. Village hall committees will need to consider the following information:

- Any recorded information about hirers and trustees
- Circulation lists for newsletters
- Information about tickets for events
- Fundraising/raffles/supporters
- Reclaiming Gift Aid on donations
- Members in 'membership' organisations
- Contracts of employment

- Shareholders
- Accident books, insurance claims, CC return, etc.
- Other...

ACRE has produced a *preliminary* Information Sheet on Data Protection for Village Halls – so if you would like a copy, please feel free to contact CAN and Louise will e-mail a copy to you. The sheet is likely to be amended once the regulations come into force – but it gives some helpful 'general' advice if you want to start to prepare.

In the meantime if you want to explore things further, the following Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website has plenty of advice. www.ico.org.uk

The ICO Helpline for small organisations is: 0303 123 1113 (select option 4 to be diverted to staff who can offer support).

Corsenside Parish Hall – Getting There!

By Rev Richard Virden, trustee of Corsenside Parish Hall



Northumberland Theatre Company showing 'The Disasters of Johnny Armstrong and Other Daft Tales'

Corsenside Parish Hall, first opened in 1906 as the Woodburn Institute, and now comprises a main hall, supper room, kitchen and toilets and operates under a Charity Commission scheme. The building still has an important part to play in the community but it came dangerously close to closing down in 2016.

Anxiety over the hall's structural condition and a gradual decline in use posed something of a 'Catch 22' difficulty in seeking capital and recurrent funding. Faced with a recommended closure and sale of the hall at the AGM in May 2016, three new people were elected with a brief to revitalize the hall. Three more members were subsequently appointed by local user-group, while two retired members gave invaluable early help with access to internet accounts and other useful assistance.

Our initial meeting with Louise and Julia, introducing us to CAN, quickly convinced us of the vital importance of training to be clear about the role of trustees and of policies and management of finance, health-and-safety and safeguarding. We also received excellent advice and help in applying for grants and in establishing a 3-year plan to improve the building and engage the support of the local community. We were very fortunate that our training by CAN during 2016 was funded by a grant from VillageSOS and we continue

to enjoy CAN's good advice and the benefits of membership of the West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium.

In 2016-2017, grants totalling £9,500 enabled us to replace part of the main hall's floor and to fit 16 double glazed windows, replacing their decayed frames. Over 2017-2018, hall use has increased from approx. 40 events (500-600 people) to approx. 70 events (more than 800 people). Further grants have made possible vital external repairs and upgrades: roof repairs, new external doors and a ramp for wheel-chair access.

Now we are applying for further support to complete internal repairs and re-ordering of doorways to make them fully fit for purpose and

to provide a new cooker in the kitchen, which is something of a priority for some of our users. Further upgrade of kitchen and toilet facilities is planned after we have completed an energy-audit and settled on specifications to bring energy-efficiency into the 21st century. In this, we are already getting brilliant support through our recent adoption by the Warm Hub Northumberland scheme, when Christine Nicholls presented us with our membership certificate at the end of a very successful evening's entertainment by Northumberland Theatre Group's light-hearted play, 'The Disasters of Johnny Armstrong and Other Daft Tales.'

There are many more hurdles to clear before our hall's future is secured, but with the goodwill and help we are getting, from within and beyond our local community, we think we are really on the way to 'getting there'.



Local Roots with National Impact



CAN is a member of the national ACRE network – ‘Action with Communities in Rural England.’ As a locally rooted charity, this provides CAN with fantastic access to an influential national network, national funding opportunities and good practice that we can learn from and build upon from around the country.

This is a network of equals. Each member is independent but we share core values and an objective to support rural communities to the best of our abilities. We talk to each other; we join in with national funding proposals where these are relevant to us and where we can offer expertise; we share views and approaches to meeting needs and to responding to national policy proposals; we even meet up now and again.

I am coming up to my third anniversary as Chief Exec at CAN. There have been many highlights so far but the tremendous relationship we have with our peers and the doors this has opened for us is certainly one of them.

All 38 members of the ACRE network (one in each county area) receive a small amount of core funding from central government. Given the ongoing period of public sector austerity, the continued existence of this funding is unique and reflects strong endorsement of the activities of the network.

Under an Agreement with government department Defra, the network report on all activities each quarter against a series of agreed priorities. The recently published report for the first half of 2017/18 demonstrates that the network drew in £4,667,274 of additional funding during this period representing £4.86 of real funding for each £1 investment made by Defra. This is an astonishing figure.

This represents cold hard cash and does not take account of the considerable additional social value associated with the investments made.

CAN is proud to be an equal player among our peers, working hard to ensure we hold our own in terms of income generated and, more importantly, the impact these funds are having.

It is good to be part of an effective national network which facilitates access to funding and enables true sharing to take place.



Andy Dean

Chief Executive
of CAN

email: andydean@ca-north.org.uk

A great year for the Rural Employment Hubs

CAN launched our Rural Employment Hubs project back in January 2015 with the opening of our first hub at Haltwhistle, which aimed to support unemployed people living in this very rural area, no matter what their individual circumstances.

The Haltwhistle Hub was initially funded as a 6-month pilot, but proved very successful and has been running ever since. It has always been our aim to extend this support to reach out to other areas and over the last year the project has really gone from strength to strength.

Key achievements this year include:

- May 2018 launch of the Prudhoe Employment Hub with the help of an LA7 European

Social Fund (ESF) Community Grant. In its first year the Prudhoe Employment Hub has **supported 46 people**, helped 9 people to take up employment and 3 to take up volunteering opportunities. We have also built good local relationships with 2 people volunteering with the project, offers of support from local businesses, and Prudhoe Town Council providing a generous grant of £1,000 in recognition of the difference the project has made to local people.

- In September we heard the fantastic news that we a second LA7 European Social Fund (ESF) Community Grant enabling us to pilot an **Employment Hub in the Upper Tynedale and Redesdale area** which launched in October. Given the extremely rural nature of this area we were unsure how big a need we

would uncover, we set ourselves a target of supporting 10 people in the 8-month trial period and so far we have reached 12 people.

- In November we were delighted to hear that applications for **ongoing funding** for the Haltwhistle Project had been successful, with both our existing funders Karbon Homes iFund and The Nat West Skills and Opportunities Fund choosing to continue their support. Over the last year the Haltwhistle Hub has **supported 34 people** with 10 finding employment, three taking up volunteering opportunities, and two achieving work related qualifications.

- We have been approached by Albemarle Barracks to ask if we could offer **employability services for army spouses** living

on the site, and we have been given a grant from the Sir James Knott Trust to pilot a course, which we hope to deliver in the next couple of months.

- We have **built relationships** with both Hexham Community Partnership and Amble Youth Project, both of whom have been running local employability services and have asked to come under the umbrella of the Rural Employment Hubs project so that we can ensure the same high level

of services is delivered across all these communities.

Perhaps most importantly of all, the members of the groups continue to tell us how important the project is to them:

“Great help with finding work and cv building, friendly people. Help is always there every time.” Adam Scott

“The work club has been a life saver for me. Teaching me how to use the computer, open a UJ account and job search. Others in the group have also

helped me which is nice support. The staff are very friendly which gives a relaxing environment and also supportive.” Glynis Hodgson



Hubs selected as Partner for the Bridge Project



Community Action Northumberland is delighted to announce our Rural Employment Hubs Project has been selected to become a partner of the Bridge Project.

The Bridge Project brings together Partners and Agencies in Northumberland to improve people’s lives, create opportunities and make a positive contribution to Northumberland communities and the regional economy.

Led by Northumberland County Council, Bridge are working with people who face the biggest barriers and challenges, no matter what, to connecting or reconnecting with education, training, volunteering and work. Working together with a number of Partner organisations, each organisation has been handpicked to deliver the project based on their varied specialisms working with people and communities with financial issues, mental health issues, building employment skills, volunteering among many more...

The Bridge Project is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery, through the Big Lottery Fund. The project has received up to £3.4m of funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund as part of the Building Better Opportunities Programme which is part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme in England.

The Department for Work and Pensions is the Managing Authority for the England European Social Fund programme. Established by the European Union, the European Social Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support skills development, employment and job creation, social inclusion and local community regenerations.

Becoming a partner in Bridge means that we will be using our skills and local networks so the rural hubs will be accessible community

resources for people to access Bridge support to get help and support to tackle a range of barriers affecting people’s lives. This means that our Rural Employment Hubs project will be extending the range of support by integrating with the Bridge Partnership services.

Andy Dean, CEO of CAN said: *“We are over the moon at becoming a partner in delivering the Bridge Project in some of Northumberland’s rural communities. This not only means we can reach more people but also acknowledges the real value of our inclusive approach to employability support, carefully developed over the last 3 years.”*



CAN and NALC relationship goes from strength to strength

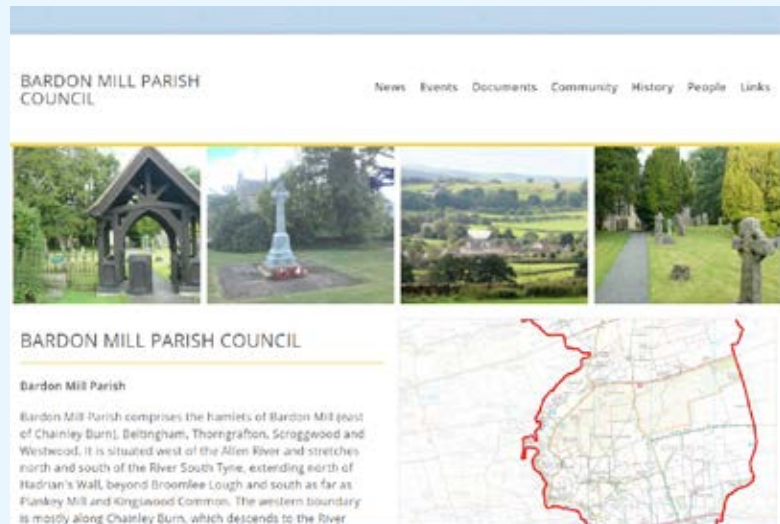
The Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC) and CAN have formally renewed their relationship into the future via an agreed memorandum of understanding. The relationship stretches back over many years and is incredibly important to CAN. The updated arrangement will see CAN continue to provide advice, training and support to Parish and Town Councils across Northumberland and in Newcastle.

Adrian Hinchcliffe, chair of CAN, said: "It is fantastic news that our hugely positive relationship with NALC will continue into the future. NALC is a critical partner for CAN in reaching into and working with communities across the county. Our aim is to help all NALC members wherever possible

and use our extensive local, regional and national networks to promote and enhance the work they do."

Alex Wallace, NALC chair, said: "It is great that our longstanding relationship with CAN has been

further enhanced and we look forward to many years of mutually supportive close working to the benefit of both organisations, our members and the communities we serve."



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Free central heating systems from the Warm Homes Fund

Seven North East councils, including Northumberland County Council, have been awarded funding from the 'Warm Homes Fund' to install free central heating systems in certain parts of the North East, subject to eligibility and survey.

In addition, household can access free and confidential appointments with an adviser to:

- help you check you are on the best fuel tariff
- give you free and confidential advice on energy costs
- help you improve energy efficiency in the home and save money

You can find out if you qualify by calling 01670 624140.

Lines are open Monday – Thursday 8.30am – 5pm and Fridays 8.30am – 4.30pm.

You can find out more, and download a leaflet to see if you are eligible, on CAN's website via the following link:

<http://ca-north.org.uk/news/apply-for-a-free-central-heating-system-now-subject-to-eligibility>