



a voice  
for rural  
communities

# News

**SUMMER ISSUE - JULY 2017**

Charity (no. 1144604)

Company limited by guarantee (no. 7805401)

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## Calling all Parish Councils interested in Community-led housing



Community-led housing is already a success story in Northumberland and CAN now seeks to build on this solid platform thanks to funding from Northumberland County Council from its allocation of the government's Community Housing Fund. We want to identify specific opportunities and ensure the

support required by individual communities is available, by working with Social Regeneration Consultants, Glendale Gateway Trust and others. Part of the work involves establishing the level of interest there may be across the area. Parish and Town Councils potentially have a key role in supporting or providing community-led housing schemes.

### Have you filled in our survey?

We are currently surveying all Parish and Town Councils to find out if community-led housing might make a difference in their village or town and whether they would like to find out more about it. If you are a clerk or chair and

have not received this survey please get in touch at [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)

CAN is holding workshops on Community Led Housing in September so you can find out more about this initiative and explore how we can help. See page 2 for further details and how to book.



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## Community-led housing workshops, book your place now

CAN is holding 3 workshop events in early September to allow you to find out more about community-led housing and explore how we might be able to help.

### Workshop objectives are:

- Participants are better informed about community led housing (CLH).
- Participants can better identify the potential for CLH in their areas.
- Participants can network and make connections.
- Participants have more confidence to develop potential CLH projects.

### Target audiences are:

- Members of Parish and Town Councils.
- Local councillors.
- Community-based organisations with an interest in affordable housing.
- Relevant people from local authorities and other public bodies.
- Representatives of landowners, churches etc.

### These sessions will be held at:

[Tyndale Cricket Club](#), Hexham

Wednesday 13th September

[Stannington Village Hall](#)

Thursday 14th September

[St James's Church Centre](#), Alnwick

Tuesday 19th September

The workshops run from 6.30pm-8.30pm with limited places. To book contact [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk) or visit [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk) and search Community Led Housing Northumberland to book online, or visit our website.

## 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.



## Transport Surveys to be launched in 4 Rede Valley Parishes

In the next few weeks residents of Corsenside, Elsdon, Otterburn and Rochester & Byrness Parishes will have an opportunity to take part in a local transport survey, giving them a chance to influence the future provision of transport in their area. This survey is being carried out by the local Parish Councils and CAN with the support of the County Council as part of the Getabout Access

Scheme, which aims to address gaps in local transport provision within Northumberland.

Local people identified transport as one of the greatest issues for residents of Corsenside, Elsdon, and Otterburn. The current survey aims to explore in more depth the nature of transport difficulties in these four parishes with a view to exploring possible solutions to meet local needs. Possible outcomes could include making small

adjustments to existing services, or creating new community transport solutions such as provision of dial-a-ride services, establishing a local volunteer driver scheme, or setting up a local car share.

If you live in one of these four parishes, please look out for the survey arriving through your door and take a moment to complete the survey, even if transport is not currently an issue for you.



## What does community-led housing look like?



let through a Local Lettings Policy to ensure those in need from the local area can benefit from the new homes.

A Housing Needs survey identified an acute shortage of affordable rented homes in Stocksfield. The Parish Plan identified the need for more affordable homes, but local residents were concerned about any new developments being built on green belt as the village sits in a beautiful rural setting. A consultation questionnaire was sent to all 1,200 households resulting in huge public support for the need for affordable housing. Examples included those who had family wanting to live in the village or whom had left and now wanted to return to care for elderly residents.

A key objective was to develop the new homes on brownfield sites to help minimise their environmental impact and protect the green belt. More than 60 people applied for the homes, clearly demonstrating the significant need which exists.

Other great case studies online are at the **National Community Land Trust Network** and the **Rural Housing Alliance**.

One local example is in Stocksfield where no new affordable homes had been built for 25 years till the community decided to build homes themselves.

A group of like-minded residents recognised the population was ageing, and it was also becoming ever harder for anybody not earning a substantial salary to afford to live there. The next generation were moving elsewhere, sometimes for work, but sometimes simply because they had no choice – there was nowhere affordable for them to live, whether buying or renting.

Broomley & Stocksfield Parish Council approved the formation of a Community Land Trust (CLT) through the local Stocksfield Community Association named SCATA. They brought forward plans to develop a derelict site next to the village tennis club, along with a small additional site where former public toilets stood.

SCATA formed a partnership with one of the largest housing providers in the North East, Isos Housing (now Karbon Homes), to work on the development of seven much-needed new, affordable homes to rent by local people in the village. All four flats and three bungalows have been

## Do you have difficulty travelling to essential services in Northumberland?

A free information and advice service exists which will endeavour to help solve your transport needs, provided by Adapt (North East). Just call: **03333 441740**

An adviser will discuss your situation, where you live and where you need to get to, to understand what options may be available and then help you find the best solution to meet your requirements.



## Northumberland's smaller Parish Councils get online with support from NALC

Two years ago national transparency rules were introduced for smaller Parish Councils placing a duty on them to publish key information online. This proved to be a challenge for many in Northumberland so NALC (through its partnership with CAN) stepped in to help.

We commissioned a 'portal' system which provides each member council with a proforma website. They are then able to customise it and

manage the content, safe in the knowledge that advice and back up is available through CAN if required.

The system has now been operating successfully for several months and 43 councils have joined up so far. The sites are proving effective and simple to use, and the project has won national recognition as an example of good practice.

If your Parish or Town Council would like to find out more or

would like to join the portal contact [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk).

Links to all Parish Councils' websites are available through the NALC website at <https://northumberlandalc.uk/councils>



## Consistency amidst increasing change

"A change is as good as a rest," so the saying goes. "Organisations that stand still are dead in the water." "Constant innovation and challenge are the best way to continually strive for success."

There is much truth in these words, perhaps. It is certainly true to say that organisations that do not recognise the need to move with the times struggle to survive. It is also true to say that a lot of big changes are afoot at present. We have seen political change at local government level and Brexit will inevitably result in massive change – good or bad depends on your perspective, but further significant change is indeed coming.

Future policies, programmes, institutional structures, trade agreements and many other elements are all potentially up in the air at present in terms of what we will have in place in the not too distant future.

This is not the first time, of course, that significant change has taken place. Whether it is changes to local government

structures (Northumberland's reorganisation in 2009 or the more fundamental 1974 reorganisation), huge fluctuations in the economy and world of finance, entering the Common Market or leaving the European Union change has become, well, a bit of a constant theme really... for decades.

However, charitable organisations such as CAN rightly claim to have provided some consistency throughout these changes by always endeavouring to meet the needs of those we are here to serve. Trying to make the policies and programmes put in place relevant to local communities and helping communities to support themselves is what we do regardless of what is going on around us. Like a lot of local charities, CAN has ridden the various changes which have taken place, continually endeavouring to meet our objectives. In our case we have been working to support the rural communities of Northumberland for over 66 years – consistently.

That is not to say that we are not constantly evolving and



innovating in an effort to find the best ways to meet these needs. If we want to continue our success for another 66 years we must do that – and we are. From Warm Hubs to Employment Hubs, from community buildings to affordable homes we are trying our best to help ensure local needs are met and opportunities realised. That's what good local charities do – consistently, whatever the wider changes may be.

**Andy Dean**  
Chief Executive  
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# Brexit must work for rural communities as a whole



A Rural Coalition is calling on the government to deliver a sustainable future for the countryside in post Brexit UK. CAN is part of a national network of Rural Community Councils operating under the banner of ACRE – Action with Communities in Rural England, one of 12 national bodies forming the coalition.

**The statement published by the Rural Coalition in July identifies four principles which should underpin policy making:**

- Brexit discussions must recognise ‘rural’ is more than agriculture and the natural environment.
- All Brexit negotiations and post Brexit policies must be rural proofed.

- Policies and funding must deliver a fair deal for rural communities.
- Decision-making, funding and delivery must be devolved and involve rural communities.
- The government is urged to recognise 9.3 million people live in rural England (17% of the country’s total population) and 524,000 businesses operate there generating an annual turnover in excess of £400 billion.

**The Rural Coalition calls on the government to take four positive actions:**

- Introduce an ambitious annual target for the number of new affordable

homes built in rural areas and a dedicated rural affordable housing funding programme.

- Deliver a support programme for rural businesses and community entrepreneurs.
- Ensure that the extra costs of delivering services in rural areas are properly reflected in any funding formula, such as those used for local government, education and the NHS.
- Provide a comprehensive community infrastructure support programme, which recognises the pressures on volunteers, helps those places with less capacity and spreads existing good rural practice.

It is still early days in relation to the Brexit negotiations and the configuration of policy for the post Brexit UK. It is critical that the voice of rural communities is actively heard. ACRE and the Rural Coalition are working hard to achieve this. You can read more on the Rural Coalition statement here: <http://acre.org.uk/our-work/rural-coalition>.

## Supporting sustainable local development

The Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts (FoNDT) have produced a Review to highlight the great work the various trusts do right across Northumberland. FoNDT exists to assist Northumberland’s 17 local Development Trusts “to create a self-sustaining enterprising culture which enables local communities to be resilient and have the ability to control and shape their own futures.”

CAN supports these trusts in

a variety of ways. For example, every Friday we operate our **Prudhoe Employment Hub** from Prudhoe Community Partnership’s Spetchells building in the centre of the town and earlier this year we helped **Hexham Community Partnership** to access funds from a number of sources to facilitate the continuation of a key project.

In **Haltwhistle**, we provide project officer services to Haltwhistle Partnership to manage their various activities. This has

included a major project to refurbish a significant building in the centre of the town to create a ground floor retail unit along with 4 low cost flats to rent above and the community asset transfer of a County Council building to facilitate the growth of a highly successful local youth project.

You can read more about FoNDT and read their 2017 review at [www.fondt.org](http://www.fondt.org)

## What's a Warm Hub? Watch our new film to find out

To help spread the word about Warm Hubs and explain the project to newcomers, CAN has produced a short film, with support from Northern Gas Networks.

Premiered at July's Warm Hubs conference, the film catches the spirit of the project from the point of view of CAN

as coordinator, Northern Gas Networks as funder and local volunteers as the key to the success of the project.

You can view the film via our YouTube channel through our website. To find out more about Warm Hubs contact [christinenicholls@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:christinenicholls@ca-north.org.uk)  
<http://ca-north.org.uk/supporting-individuals/warm-hub-project>



## Warm Hubs gets national recognition

Warm Hubs has been highlighted this month as national best practice by the Rural Coalition, a group of 12 national bodies working together on highlighting rural policy. Their recent Rural Statement had an accompanying document with case studies on how their policy priorities could be addressed.

Warm Hubs was identified as being a good practice example of long-term support for social action, to help communities become more resilient.

## A conference, but not as we know it - Warm Hub style

Over 60 guests were given a taster of the Warm Hubs experience last month in Seahouses with a fish and chip lunch, followed by local ice cream and a round of singing led by a group from one of our Warm Hubs. This was a conference with a difference - to celebrate the success of CAN's Warm Hubs project, encourage other venues to join in and improve Warm Hub links to funders and other stakeholders, all organised by CAN.

The key objective was to connect Warm Hubs with representatives from organisations who think they can help hubs in the future, seeking pledges of support from each other. Speakers included Tom Bell from Northern Gas Networks and Steve Forster from Together Newcastle. The Big Lottery, Northumberland County Council and

Northumberland CVA were among the delegates.

'Warm Hubs' are places within the local community where residents can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment in which to enjoy the company of other people. Food is provided at Warm Hubs in a variety of forms including soup and roll, coffee and cake, bought-in food such as fish and chips or, in some case, a three course meal.

Each venue that joins the scheme determines what it wants to provide locally, and operates within broad guidelines established by the pilot project and currently being developed into a 'pledge.' Each participating venue is asked to undergo an assessment to ensure that the service they offer meets a minimum standard, allowing them to call

themselves a 'Warm Hub' and to use the logo. The project is supported by Northern Gas Networks.

The conference was a huge success. The atmosphere was tremendous and the networking even better. Thanks must go to the Seahouses Hub for their hospitality, the Stocksfield Tuesday Group for the singing, to all participants, volunteers and stakeholders alike and to our own Christine for devising such an innovative and successful approach to a conference.





## Prudhoe Employment Hub gets off to a flying start

CAN held the first session of our new employment hub in Prudhoe on May 4th and the project looks set to be a great success.

The project helps unemployed people move closer to employment by offering guidance on writing CV's, access to the internet, support and one to one mentoring to address any issues that may be a barrier to work. We offer a free lunch and refreshments, and the chance to meet other people in a similar situation.

In our first 2 months we've already provided support to 31 people and several of our members have made real progress since joining us. Dougie is now training to be a forklift truck operator – one of three training opportunities our members have taken up.

Kath has achieved her ambition of finding a job as a cleaner for the NHS - one of three people we have helped to find jobs.

### Drop in to the Hub

The Prudhoe Employment Hub meets at the Spetchells Centre on Prudhoe High St every Friday from 10am – 3pm. People are welcome to drop in at any time during the day. To find out

about joining or volunteering for the project, contact Julia Plinston on 01670 517178 or [juliaplinston@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:juliaplinston@ca-north.org.uk).

*The Prudhoe Employment Hub is funded from the European Social Fund as part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme in England.*



## CAN welcomes Michelle Awburn to the Staff Team



CAN is delighted to announce Michelle Awburn joining our staff team. Michelle works on a self-employed basis as a tutor delivering our Employment Hubs at Haltwhistle and Prudhoe.

Michelle brings a wealth of experience and local knowledge to the project. She has lived in Tynedale all her life, and worked for 8 years for the National Careers Service as a careers advisor based at Hexham Job Centre Plus. She has provided support and encouragement to the Haltwhistle project since it started and more recently volunteered for the project for several months whilst taking a break from paid employment.

## New marketing face for CAN

We are delighted to announce that Carrie Brookes has been appointed as CAN's new marketing consultant, helping to make sure we spread the word effectively about what we are doing. Carrie joins us with a wealth of experience including 14 years working in the voluntary sector providing communications support for various charities, including VONNE. Her skills include communications strategy, training and developing content for websites, ebulletins and social media.



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## Buy your LPG and coal through our OilCAN scheme

If you use LPG or coal to heat your home or premises, don't forget that these can be purchased as part of our collective fuel procurement scheme – OilCAN. CAN has an agreement with A F Affinity Ltd who undertake the collective buying and search the market to find the best prices for LPG, coal and heating oil for members of our OilCAN scheme across Northumberland and Durham. If you want to find out more contact us as [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)

### CAN's Annual General Meeting

*Date for the diary*  
**1st November 2017**

will take place on **Wednesday 1st November** this  
year between 1pm and 4pm. *Formal invitations will  
be distributed later this year.*

## A record 4 halls achieve Hallmark status

CAN's Village Halls Adviser has seen an unprecedented interest from halls applying for ACRE Hallmark status - the quality standard scheme for the management of community buildings/village halls. On average around 5 halls a year apply to be assessed, but within 3 weeks, four halls were assessed for the standard, with a fifth in preparation.

### Congratulations to the following halls achieving Hallmark status:

- Wark Mechanics Institute and Town Hall.
- Longhoughton Village Development Trust.
- St Aidan's (Berwick) Trust.
- The Jubilee Institute, Rothbury achieving level 2.

Vicky Herod, Trustee of Wark Mechanics Institute and Town Hall said of the process:

*"Taking up the challenge of Hallmark 1 meant as a committee we had to look again at the Hall, its uses, systems and how the Hall was run. We identified a few places where the procedures needed to be clarified both for ourselves and the users such as hire agreement and charges, but in general we were pleased we were on the right track. Achieving Hallmark 1 has encouraged us to further promote the Hall as a quality venue."*

Taking part in the Hallmark Scheme is entirely voluntary and beneficial to halls in many ways, find out more by contacting Louise Currie [louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:louisecurrie@ca-north.org.uk) or visit our website and search for Hallmark.

