

Community Action Northumberland
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held on Monday 18th November 2024
Longhoughton Community & Sports Centre

Present: Lord Curry of Kirkharle, President in the Chair
Jean Humphrys, Chair of the Board, members and friends of Community Action Northumberland with Mr Andy Dean, Chief Executive Officer, and members of staff. 70 attendees in total.
Apologies were received from 3 attendees.

1. President's Opening Remarks

The President opened the meeting by welcoming all participants to the 2024 Annual General Meeting.

Lord Curry spoke about recent Government budget announcements that would impact our farmers and the rural landscape. Over the last 50 years farmers were offered incentives to produce food, with new policies focussing directly on the environment. There is a need for balance between these two priorities, protecting our environment but acknowledging that food security is critical. International conflicts, adverse weather and funding regimes all impact farming with Northumberland's upland farming particularly affected.
The introduction of changes to inheritance tax impacts the next generation. The list of variables for the future is fraught with risk with little thought for small family farms.

How land is used in rural areas also needs to be carefully addressed. Current discussions in government concerning land use framework design will help inform how land is best used in the future across the competing demands. This needs to ensure food security is properly considered.

2. Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting and any matters arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record.
Lord Curry Introduced the Chair, Jean Humphrys to the AGM.

3. Presentation of the 2023-24 Annual Report

The Chair, Jean Humphrys, thanked Lord Curry for his passionate presentation, highlighting how the ever changing/moving activities of our organisation could be impacted by the political scene.

Jean began her presentation of the annual report to the AGM, by thanking CAN staff who deliver a wide range of activities effectively. In a year of austerity Andy Dean and staff have produced a healthy budget, reflecting our continued good reputation. We receive funds because CAN deliver! It is important to recognise the strength of CAN. Jean thanked the trustees for supporting CAN, it means so much to have individuals who give so much of their time and expertise to this organisation.

Energy is key in government policy and CAN has benefitted through individuals having direct support from our energy team and more recently NCEL -community buildings and village halls taking advantage of the improvements solar energy can provide. Our expertise has assisted people to avoid wading through a plethora of information and advisors but empower them to make informed decisions. Warm hubs provide a way for communities to support themselves as their needs dictate.

Working alongside ACT in Cumbria and DCA in Durham, CAN has helped provide Village halls with stability and resilience to ensure future connections and generations can benefit from these critical facilities.

Digital inclusion to be part of the wider world, guarantees no matter how rurally isolated the community happen to live they are part of a much bigger community and not forgotten.

Jean's final comment thanked everyone who has contributed to CAN experiencing such a successful year.

4. Presentation of the 2023-24 Accounts

Adrian Hinchcliffe (Honorary Treasurer) presented the 2022-23 accounts. Slides explained the figures for the year, showing a deficit of £11,868.

Adrian explained, since 2019 the Board chose to allocate any surplus funds to several purposes, including reinvesting in future delivery of projects. These are held in unrestricted/designated funds and the slides indicate the value of these funds in the accounts. Whilst utilising the restricted funds and apportioning surplus funds, the accounts show healthy reserves, with a purpose of generating further income and activities for CAN. The proportion of funds expended on administration costs remains at 2% of funds in 2023-24 with 98% directly impacting communities via projects.

Adrian thanked the Board and the funders.

Lord Curry invited questions regarding the accounts but there were none.

5. Appointment of Honorary Officers

Lord Curry asked all those participating with any of CAN formal business to show their agreement by raising their hand.

The following honorary officers were nominated to act for another year and were duly elected:

- (i) **President:** Lord Curry of Kirkharle
- (ii) **Vice Presidents:** Alan Beith, The Venerable Bob Langley, Sally Black, Rev Canon Bob Burston, David Francis and Sheila Walker.
- (iii) **Treasurer:** Barrie Hensby
- (iv) **Auditor:** Robson Laidler

6. Election of the Board

Under CAN's three-year cycle of Board tenure, the following Board members continue until a future AGM: Jean Humphrys, Jan Ashdown, Barrie Hensby, Norman Hooks and Charlotte Wright.

The following existing Board member was at the end of a three-year cycle and was nominated to the Board for a further 3 years: the Venerable Dr Catherine Sourbut-Groves.

In addition, Jeremy Phillipson was co-opted onto the Board earlier in 2024, was now nominated to the Board for 3 years. Janice Rose was also proposed as a new Trustee for 3 years. Both were agreed.

Liz Elliott, Valerie Vaughan stood down as trustees at the end of their maximum 9 year term. In addition to Stephanie Ellis resigned earlier this year. All were thanked for their contributions to CAN.

All board nominations were approved.

7. Challenges and Opportunities

Andy Dean introduced some of the work CAN is involved in.

- Employability – Bridge Project was very successful and has been replaced by Solid Foundations which is carrying on the success of Bridge.
- Housing – Community-led Housing which gives support to organisations seeking to develop their own affordable homes. A Rural Housing Enabler is being employed by CAN to work closely with the local authority, Parish Councils, Registered Providers, the private sector and others to form innovative partnerships committed to the delivery of rural affordable housing.
- Volunteering Development – CAN's delivery of the North of Tyne Volunteering Project in connection with Warm Hubs, Village Halls and Rural Employment Hubs. Also supporting VCSE organisations that involve volunteers to operate volunteering effectively.
- Village Halls – Includes Hallmark, Heritage Project, Digital Inclusion, carbon reduction, energy costs, sustainability and the Community Spaces Partnership.
- Energy & Fuel Poverty – Energy advice, Warm Hubs, slow cooker demonstrations, Domestic Carbon Reduction Project, Northumberland Off-grid Task Force.
- Northumberland Community Energy Ltd – Solar Panel and battery installation into community buildings across Northumberland - 39 feasibility studies completed, 11 planning permissions obtained, legal support in place, 2 installations commissioned (Corsenside & Longhoughton), funds in place for next 5 installations.
- Rural Voice – CAN's role in delivering a rural voice for Northumberland is delivered through a number of routes including the ACRE network, Defra, Rural Services Network, CAN Enews, County & Regional Strategy, VONNE, NE & Yorkshire Net Zero Hub, NICRE and the Rural Design Centre.

Andy reflected on 3 critical elements of CAN's delivery: collaboration & partnership are key; funding diversity is critical; 'We are good at what we do'.

Finally, a short film by Ofgem was shown, and is available to view, reflecting the tremendous value of CAN's energy advice work and the fantastic impact of Warm Hubs.

A Dean thanked the staff and trustees for their contribution to CAN.

8. Launch of the Cairn Programme

9. Thanks and closure

Lord Curry thanked staff, trustees, and attendees.

Jean Humphrys closed the AGM with thanks to Lord Curry, all CAN's supporters, members, staff and trustees, and those that attended this AGM for their ongoing support.

The meeting closed at 11.45am.