



a voice  
for rural  
communities

# News

**AUTUMN ISSUE - OCTOBER 2017**

Charity (no. 1144604) Company limited by guarantee (no. 7805401)

[www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)

## New President to be announced at AGM



After 25 years as President of CAN, His Grace the Duke of Northumberland is to become our formal Patron. CAN's board and staff are tremendously grateful to His Grace for his unstinting support over a quarter of a century and it is fantastic news that our relationship will continue into the future.

His Grace will formally step down as President at our AGM which takes place at Stannington Village Hall on Wednesday 1 November between 1pm and 4pm. The name of the new President of CAN will be kept under wraps and announced at the AGM. We are sure that all of our members, friends, stakeholders and supporters will be excited at the appointment which reflects CAN's significant stature both locally and nationally in the rural development world.

At the AGM, this year kindly sponsored by 0800 Repair, our Chairman will take the opportunity to update the audience on some of CAN's current activities and successes whilst our



chief executive and a small number of local guest speakers will share a taste of what is to come. This will include our work to overcome fuel poverty, housing and employment issues as well as our core relationships with village halls and parish councils. A light buffet lunch will be provided.

You can book a place at the AGM online or visit our website.

## CAN launches new Bellingham Employment Hub

CAN is very pleased to announce we have received a grant of £15,000 from the European Social Fund (ESF) to set up a new Employment Hub in Bellingham, along similar lines to those we already run at Haltwhistle and Prudhoe.



The Employment Hub will provide support available to anyone living in Bellingham and the North Tyne Valley who is looking for employment. Our drop-in support group will be open every Tuesday morning from 10am-1pm at Bellingham Town Hall. We'll be

in the community room which can be accessed from the door next to the library on the Manchester Square side of the building (this is the opposite side of the building and downstairs from the main entrance).

Group members will be able to access the internet to carry out job searches, benefit from one to one careers guidance, help with completing CVs and job applications, and support with improving IT skills. A free lunch and refreshments will be available and we may be able to offer travel expenses for those coming from outlying areas.

On Tuesday afternoons we are able to offer 1-1 appointments in local venues for anyone from outlying areas who

does not have access to transport into Bellingham.

Julia Plinston, Community Development Officer at CAN said:

*"We are delighted to be able to offer this exciting new service in Bellingham. Members of our Employment Hubs at Haltwhistle and Prudhoe have told us how valuable our help is to them, and we look forward to offering the same level of support to residents in North Tyne & Redesdale."*

If you would like to find out more about the project, or are interested in booking an appointment, please contact Julia at [juliaplinston@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:juliaplinston@ca-north.org.uk) or phone 01670 517178.



## To grow or not to grow?

Growing any organisation is a challenge. Many businesses have struggled with growth – some expanding too soon based on fragile markets; some losing sight of their original objectives or core business; some putting too many eggs in the same basket; some just getting it wrong.

The same can be said for charities and other not-for-profit organisations. In many ways, the consequences of failure are even greater due to the impact on those who may rely on the services provided.

Effectively managed growth is a delicate business. Expanding too soon can be unsustainable and hugely damaging. Failing to grasp new opportunities or to ensure the right capacity is in place to deliver against commitments equally so.

Having emerged from a period of considerable change, CAN is now carefully managing its growth in line with our growing success. As our Annual Report for 2016/17 will show when published at our upcoming AGM, CAN is a strong, stable organisation delivering on a variety of fronts around our vision of rural communities in Northumberland that are vibrant, inclusive, confident, effective and capable of sustaining themselves.

Our growing success in recent years is based on robust foundations: a strong board; passionate staff; excellent relationships with our key stakeholders; diversified income streams; and an enterprising approach to meeting needs. Recent appointments of a specialist marketing consultant to lead our communications strategy and a specialist advisor to run our growing

network of Rural Employment Hubs reflect this controlled response to growth, as does a growing network of active volunteers and our partnership with other local organisations to help deliver specific projects.

We know we are good at what we do – and we know we could do more. If we do grow further we will aim to do this in a manner which is controlled, sustainable and which builds on the expertise which already exists in Northumberland: controlled growth based on solid foundations.

**Andy Dean**  
Chief Executive  
of CAN  
email: andy.dean@ca-north.org.uk



## ECO scheme subsidises boiler replacements

As winter approaches we are reminded how cold homes can severely affect the health and well-being of vulnerable and lower income households. Community Action Northumberland working in partnership with North East based 0800 Repair are raising awareness of opportunities so as many qualifying households as possible benefit from a warmer and healthier home this winter.

In April 2017 the Government's Energy Company Obligation scheme (ECO) introduced a new opportunity to help qualifying off-gas rural home-owners or private tenants to have inefficient

Oil or LPG boilers (7 or more years old), and inefficient Electric Storage Heaters replaced completely free of charge or generously subsidised.

The ECO scheme also subsidises the replacement of older gas boilers and offers free or generously subsidised Loft, Cavity Wall and Attic Room Insulation. UK Building Regulations advise Loft Insulation should be 270mm / 10ins deep.

If you, or a member of your family, or your local community want to find out more then full details are only a moment away! Please visit [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk) for more information or call 0800 Repair's ECO Eligibility Team on 0191 607 5112.



Your enquiry will be welcomed by a helpful, friendly adviser who will answer all your questions.

**Note: ECO is a Government regulated scheme to help qualifying home-owners and private tenants replace older inefficient boilers / electric storage heaters and insulate homes. All replacement boilers funded by ECO come with a full manufacturer's warranty supported by 1 year full install warranty and 24/7 breakdown cover.**

## Redesdale Transport Survey

CAN would like to thank all the residents of Corsenside, Elsdon, Otterburn and Rochester & Byrness Parishes who took the time to complete the transport survey we delivered to every household as part of the Getabout project. We were delighted to receive 126 completed surveys a response rate of 15%. Our staff are now busy analysing the results and hope to publish initial findings in October. Once complete reports will be sent to everyone who requested one, and we will be working the local parish councils to identify appropriate solutions to meet the needs identified. Look out for more on this story in future newsletters.

## Thropton's new Warm Hub making people glow



Volunteers and organisers at the first Warm Hub meeting receiving their certificate on behalf of Thropton War Memorial Hall Committee

CAN's award winning Warm Hubs project has expanded into Thropton, holding its first successful lunch in September.

Warm Hubs is an innovative project by CAN to help support communities across rural Northumberland by investing in their local facilities and providing training to volunteers. Within a Warm Hub people can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment in which to enjoy a healthy, good value meal, the company of other people and social activity as well as access to information and advice if needed.

Thropton War Memorial Hall is now holding Warm Hub lunches fortnightly. Lunch will be soup and a roll plus a pudding, tea and coffee, costing £4. The lunch is organised by Vikki Ewen and

supported by a range of volunteers from Thropton WI, local Churches and Thropton residents.

Pupils of Thropton Village First School will be joining the Hub from time to time, coming to chat, sing and play board games. Further occasional entertainment and recreations planned include local musicians, guest speakers and health and social care specialists. There is also a regular book swap.

Getting to the Hub has been made easy with the Upper Coquetdale Community Bus offering transport to the Hall by collecting local residents from either Phillips Newsagents or the Library in Rothbury. There is also the potential for home pick-up either in Rothbury or further up the Coquet Valley. To arrange home pick-ups contact Lesley Leeson at UCCT on

01669 622264 or email UCCT3@hotmail.com

Thropton Warm Hubs co-ordinator Vikki Ewen said of the launch: "I am thrilled that thanks to the help of Christine Nicholls at CAN, generous support from Lesley Leeson and Thropton First School, we have been able to start our fortnightly lunches. It is a fabulous concept and one which can only bring good, positive things to the folk who come along or volunteer. More volunteers are always welcome to help out either with food or just coming along and chatting to people."

Twenty Warm Hubs have been rolled out in rural Northumberland with further hubs planned for urban areas in Newcastle, all supported from the outset and funded by Northern Gas Networks.



## Get ready for Winter newsletter

Watch out for a series of special edition newsletters from CAN over the winter setting out some tips on how to stay warm and some places where support is available. The newsletters will include updates on our OilCAN scheme for keeping the costs of heating fuel down (oil, LPG and coal), Warm Hub activities and training courses for volunteers. There might even be a recipe of the month from one of our Warm Hubs!



## Supporting CAN

Over many years, we have greatly appreciated the support many local community groups and others have given us. Although we currently receive grants from DEFRA and charitable sources, support from local bodies is vital in enabling us to continue the work we do, providing advice and support to organisations and communities across Northumberland and acting as a critical 'rural voice.'

CAN has responded to the ever changing financial and political environment by comprehensively reviewing our services, implementing new activities and diversifying our range of income sources. This



*CAN's work includes liaising with partners to provide support for householders in rural Northumberland so they can cope with the high cost of energy in the home*

enables us to continue to provide a free service where it is needed whilst achieving full cost recovery on more detailed work.

Donations are a critical element of our annual funding package and enable us to clearly demonstrate the commitment of local communities to our work which also then helps to generate additional funds. If you

would like to consider a small donation to CAN to enable us to continue to serve Northumberland's communities please get in touch. If you would like to discuss this further or would like any additional information please do not hesitate to contact [andydean@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:andydean@ca-north.org.uk)

## Community-led housing – spreading the word

Over 50 people attended three workshops we held in Alnwick, Hexham and Stannington during September to explain how local communities can take the driving seat in seeking to deliver affordable homes for local people.

Community-led housing schemes have six main features:

- They put local communities in the driving seat.
- They are usually small scale
- Although most schemes are usually set up and run by local people in their own communities
- They provide genuinely affordable homes for rent, shared ownership, sale or self-build
- Schemes meet long-term local housing needs
- Community-led housing is not for profit, involving considerable voluntary effort

Parish and Town Councils potentially have a key role in supporting or providing community-led housing schemes. Over the summer, we carried out a survey of local councils which produced some interesting results including:



- 54% of Parish and Town Councils in Northumberland want to see more affordable homes provided for local people in their areas; only 13% do not
- 77% of Parish and Town Councils feel high property prices is the main issue behind the lack of affordable homes; 25% feel community opposition is the main issue for them
- 19 Parish and Town Councils say they can identify pieces of land they feel may be suitable for small community-led housing schemes and most are aware of their ownership
- 26 Parish and Town Councils are keen to know more about community-led housing and how they might help provide it locally

With funding made available by Northumberland County Council from their allocation of the government's Community Housing Fund, we are able to provide direct support to community organisations in investigating the potential of community-led housing and bringing specific schemes to fruition. If you are interested in finding out more visit our website or contact [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)



## Volunteer drivers needed

**Our Clive says give it a shot!**



Northumberland transport access scheme Getabout is looking to recruit more volunteer drivers to help meet growing need in particular the rural West and North of the county.

Run by Adapt (North East) with support from Community Action Northumberland and funded by Northumberland County Council, Getabout is a free service for people having difficulty getting out and about.

The service offers information and advice to help people access existing community transport schemes and public transport services, but can also provide a volunteer driver who will drive their own car to transport people to essential services such as health appointments.

Getabout volunteers are paid 45p per mile for taking people in their car to a pre-booked destination and will receive appropriate training.

Volunteers will also have the opportunity to drive for other local schemes. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver or would like to find out more, please contact us at [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk) or call Andrew at Adapt (North East) on 03333 441740.



*Clive Taylor, Volunteer Driver*

Clive is a volunteer driver for Getabout, taking people in his own car on journeys they'd be unable to make without some support. Here he tells us what the role involves, and why he'd recommend it to anyone looking to give something back to their community in a flexible way.

*"I'm a fairly busy bloke, but when I saw the advert in a local newsletter requesting volunteer drivers it struck me as something I could fit into my life pretty easily, with a great deal of flexibility and minimum training. I'd been considering doing some volunteering ever since I retired 4 years ago, and this type of work is ideally suited to someone like me, as the service is mostly needed during the day when people have appointments to get to."*

*"I was invited to a day's training in Hexham, covering the basics such as what to do if your car breaks down, how to handle people, that sort of common sense thing. It also covered dealing with expenses such as petrol costs and car parking charges, as we get reimbursed for all of those."*

*"So, a couple of times a week, I pick people up and take them to where they need to be, it's as simple as that."*

*"I help one gentleman on a regular basis which I enjoy. I take him on*

*a Friday afternoon to visit his wife in a residential care home 20 miles away. He couldn't get there himself as there's no public transport available and it obviously means a lot to them both to keep this visit going. I leave him there for a couple of hours then pick him up, which is convenient for me as I use that time to get the weekly shop in!"*

*"For me I feel it's a really vital role for the simple fact that there are a significant number of people in the community with little or no access to reliable transport, which is where Getabout comes in. That's when I can 'step into the breach' and help these folk."*

*"I certainly get a real kick out of helping make their journey and their day easier. Going somewhere new or on your own can seem simple to most of us, but can be very nerve-racking for an elderly person. I don't just drop them at the door, I like to help them to where they need to be in the hospital before leaving them in someone else's hands. That makes the difference, using a bit of common sense and being fairly sociable."*

*"For those thinking about volunteering, I'd say give it a shot! Every person I've taken has been appreciative of the effort, happy such a valuable service exists."*



## West Northumberland consortium and CAN consolidate links

From 1 October this year, CAN has entered a formal agreement with the West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium (WNCBC) to provide a range of key services. This includes:

- organising consortium meetings
- disseminating the consortium newsletter including latest news from member halls, legal updates and current opportunities
- development of the consortium website
- consolidated provision of support



This is an exciting development for CAN and one which will underpin the ongoing success of the Consortium.

As with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium, WNCBC is an independent charity which has provided important support to its members for many years and allowed halls to learn from each other and benefit from collective action on a number of practical fronts including PAT testing, energy purchase and insurance.

The new arrangement will help to ensure that WNCBC goes from strength to strength and benefits

to the full from the services available from CAN.

Mike Wood, Chair of the Consortium said: "Since starting life with about 20 members in 2007 to its present 62 members The West Northumberland Consortium has always been accompanied and supported by our friends from CAN and we are now looking forward to working in even closer unity with them, which will enable both organisations to provide even further support for our local communities and community buildings."

Any village halls or community buildings in West Northumberland wishing to find out more or with any queries should contact louise.wncbc@ca-north.org.uk



**Mike Wood**  
Chair of the Consortium

## Free Air Source Heat Pump on its way

As part of our work to support reduced energy costs in community buildings, CAN has been working with Daikin, provider of air conditioning and climate control solutions. This has resulted in the offer of a free Air Source Heat Pump unit for one of our Warm Hubs. More details will be available in our December edition of CAN E-news regarding the lucky venue.



Iain Bevan, Heating Commercial Manager from Daikin, told us why they are keen to support the Warm Hubs project with the offer of a free pump.

"Being warm and dry is a basic human need and it is surprising how many people in the UK cannot take this for granted. Fuel poverty is a real issue in the UK, but it poses even greater challenges in rural areas and for elderly residents in particular. It is widely accepted that a warm, healthy environment can only have a positive effect on people's health and

wellbeing, but if you can combine this with social engagement and a hot meal in a safe and friendly environment, the benefits are magnified.

The Warm Hub project can provide all these benefits and also ensure our community buildings are being used regularly. This is why Daikin (UK) is pleased to support this project, by providing an energy efficient, renewable heating system, that can provide low cost heating and hot water."



## CAN secures senior government official visit to North East

CAN provides a facilitation role to the North East Community-led Development Network. The Network brings together people from across the region to share experiences of community-led development in all its forms and to get access to the latest information and intelligence.

In this role we have managed to secure a visit to the region from Nigel Kersey, a senior civil servant at the Department for Communities and Local Government responsible for matters including the government's Community Housing Fund, as well as Matt Dodd who is the rural housing lead for Homes England (formerly known as the Homes & Communities Agency) – the government's agency which distributes the £6 billion affordable homes programme.

A special session of the network in December this year will hear the latest news from the heart of Westminster on government plans to support community-led housing development, including the best ways to access the resources available.

Keep an eye on our website for news from this session.



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

## 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 via this link.



Newcastle University's latest rural research and conference is a timely reminder for government and Local Enterprise Partnerships that ignoring the potential contribution of rural enterprise to the national economy would be a mistake as post Brexit policy is developed. Their new analysis of rural firms across the country and hosting the 15th pan-European Rural Entrepreneurship conference shine a bright light on the value, complexity

## Focus on rural enterprise

and opportunities surrounding enterprise in a rural context.

The University's analysis of 13,403 small firms in England, including 3,555 rural firms, interviewed for the UK Small Business Survey in 2015 (Small Rural Firms in English Regions: Analysis and Key findings from UK Longitudinal Small Business Survey) shows rural businesses in England are significantly more likely to be profitable than businesses in urban areas – and this is nothing to do with differences in sectors, size, age and other business characteristics of rural and urban areas.

Rural firms are also shown to be significantly stronger exporters of goods and services, are more likely to have

introduced new or improved goods in their businesses, and are more able to secure external funds, especially for capital investments in machinery and buildings, than are businesses in urban England.

Obstacles to success of significantly more concern to rural businesses than urban are revealed to be regulations or red tape, staff recruitment and skills, and taxes, rates and National Insurance. Clear evidence is also identified of untapped rural potential with, for example, more rural firms having goods or services suitable for exporting than which currently export. You can read the research via this link.



## Save money on your fuel



Join our bulk buying heating fuel service  
**OilCAN** and we CAN help you:

- save money on oil, liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and coal
- benefit from the lowest possible prices
- order quickly and easily by phone or email
- get emergency supplies if you run out unexpectedly.

Open to residents, community organisations  
and businesses in Northumberland.

**JOIN US NOW**

Visit [www.ca-north.org.uk/oil](http://www.ca-north.org.uk/oil)  
Email: [oilcan@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:oilcan@ca-north.org.uk)

**Call 01670 500812**



Registered charity no. 1144604 Company limited by guarantee no. 7805401



## Our Rural Connect



*Amble Harbour Village  
is one of 37 Rural Connect Hubs*

The recent international rural enterprise conference hosted by Newcastle University highlighted a number of novel approaches from across Europe. One such project was Rural Connect, an initiative which operates across the rural North East and is facilitated by CAN. Rural Connect provides a network for 37 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.

You can find out more about Rural Connect at their website [www.ruralconnect.biz](http://www.ruralconnect.biz)



## Wingates Wind Farm community fund

CAN administers the Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund which provides grants of around £30,000 a year for the local community throughout the life of the wind farm.

At their September meeting the local panel awarded two new grants to local projects:

- St Giles Church Netherwitton have been awarded a grant of £2496 to resurface their car park and a the path joining the car park to the church. These were in a state of disrepair and the work will mean that everyone using the church and especially wheelchair users and parents with children in buggies will have better access to attend services, social and cultural events at the church.

- Rothley & Hollinghill Parish Council were awarded £2,000 to install a defibrillator in a disused telephone box next to The Gate Pub. This is a very rural area and the pub is

used by visitors to the area including walkers, cyclists and motor cyclists visiting the beautiful Simonside Hills. The installation of the defibrillator

will ensure that local residents and visitors who experience a heart attack will have access to life saving first aid treatment as early as possible whilst waiting for medical help to arrive.

£30,000 worth of funding is available each year and applications will be considered at quarterly meetings. The application deadlines and meeting dates for 2017/18 are on our website.

Applications are invited from constituted voluntary and community groups, parish councils and schools carrying out projects which will be of community benefit within the parishes of Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst, Longhorsley, Netherwitton, Nunnykirk, and Rothley & Hollinghill.

Grants will normally be in the range of £250 to £2,000 and can be used to



Volunteers from Northumbria Water installing improvements to Fonburn Play Park

support a wide range of activities including, education, culture, arts, science, sport, environmental protection, sustainable transport, improvements to community buildings etc.

The panel meets quarterly, with the next deadline for applications being Monday 13th November, with the next panel meeting date to be held on Monday 4th December. Future dates are on the CAN website under 'Empowering Organisations' > 'Local Grant Schemes'.