

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



CHAIR'S FOREWORD

CAN has risen yet again to the many challenges of securing grant funding to provide guidance and support to people in rural Northumberland as they work to create sustainable and resilient communities. Sustainable and low-cost energy has become increasingly important and the CAN team, well trained and ready to take forward this agenda, worked with passion and determination with even more communities.

The launch of Climate Action in the Rural Northeast (CAIRN) in September 24 gave a high level of expertise and support to enable small communities to install solar panels and batteries, develop tailored community energy schemes and create a framework to assess and measure the reduction of carbon emissions. Our expertise in delivering household energy advice in rural communities has been consolidated and a rural Northeast wide approach enabled, working with our partners Northumberland Community Energy Ltd (NCEL) has gone from strength to strength and is currently working with over 100 community buildings across Northumberland. An amazing achievement given the complexities, of leasing, drawing up legal agreements and dealing with the general idiosyncrasies of community buildings. By the year end, 11 installations of panels and batteries were completed, giving a strong start to achieving the target of 100 over five years.

CAN continues to provide management support, including securing additional funding from a range of sources. The first community installations made significant reductions in the energy bills for local communities and a noticeable contribution to net zero targets within a short space of time.

CAN's work on warm hubs and employability was referenced in the House of Lords Committee looking into Rural Affairs and have been much quoted as examples of how communities remain resilient and mutually supportive, with tried and tested low maintenance measures in place to offer trusted advice and guidance. Highly successful innovation, the hallmark of CAN's work, provides key evidence on how rural communities demonstrate their strength and sustainability against the odds.

The external evaluation of the 2023-25 Community Spaces Partnership funded by National Lottery Community Fund and led by CAN brings strong testament to support this view. 'The evaluation finds that [the aims] have been met, and indeed exceeded, with community spaces, communities, and the partners benefitting in a range of ways from this pilot project.' The Development Officers provided comprehensive support to community spaces for each stage, which was described as "invaluable" and "personable", making the process more accessible and providing support for halls through project difficulties.

Funding for Employment Hubs was much reduced for a further year. Staff adapted remarkably well, and CAN was able to provide support for those in the programme to achieve their desired outcomes. A minimal advice service is in place, and the CAN team is seeking new sources of funding to provide a more holistic service for rural communities.

As the year ended, CAN was awarded a new grant to map and support the many households in Northumberland that are off grid. The funds will enable an accurate list of those off grid in Northumberland and to work with them to find further funds for sustainable energy in the future. The year end also saw a formal evaluation of the ACRE- led Rural Housing Enabler Programme with a dedicated Rural Housing Enabler working to support the delivery of affordable homes in our rural communities.

In March, Trustees voted unanimously in favour of the resolution to make Communities CAN a Community Interest Society and to rename it Communities CAN (Northeast) C.I.C. Yet another successful project initiated within CAN and growing to have the potential to become a developer of Community Led Housing (CLH) as well as continuing to provide support other organisations giving CLH across the region.

Overall, this has been another year of strong growth in CAN's support for rural communities where Andy and the team meet their targets, championed the rural voice of Northumberland and excelled at developing mutually beneficial partnerships.

Jean Humphrys, Chair



Our vision

Rural communities in Northumberland will be vibrant, inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

Our purpose

We aim to:

- Promote Rural Issues – Providing and supporting a ‘rural voice’ to influence policy, programmes and action.
- Empower Communities – Supporting and developing local communities, their key groups and organisations.
- Deliver Solutions – Identifying, developing and managing projects to address the needs of individuals.

Our guiding principles

- A consistent and absolute commitment to rural communities.
- Working with integrity, openness and a genuine passion to support Northumberland’s rural communities.
- Being flexible and responsive to change.
- Being clearly opposed to all kinds of discrimination.

How we work:

We work proactively and reactively to achieve our vision and purpose for rural communities by:

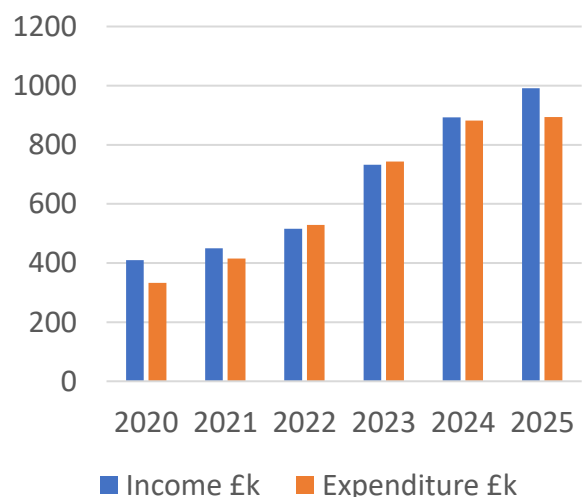
- Listening to what they tell us.
- Publicising rural issues.
- Anticipating future problems.
- Enabling and empowering communities and individuals
- Promoting exemplars.
- Demonstrating equality to all.
- Assessing our impact and continually learning as an organisation
- Embracing team working, maximising shared skills and experience.
- Strengthening our efficacy through targeted collaboration.

What have we achieved?

Despite the tumultuous environment, CAN has been determined to maintain and improve further our support for Northumberland’s rural communities. We have:

- **Enhanced our staffing complement** – our key resource as a small charity.
- **Sustained a strong financial position** – our income and expenditure levels have continued to grow, recognising the true value of our services and impact.
- **Maintained strong governance** – CAN’s board is strong, maintaining clear strategic direction, managing finances, overseeing and reviewing all our policies.
- **Delivered services that are needed** – CAN’s staff work incredibly hard to continually refine and develop our services to deliver what is needed in the best way possible.

Annual Accounts



What are our core strengths?

- **Resilience, adaptability and sustainability** – throughout the turbulent events of recent years and the challenging funding environment, we have expanded not contracted.
- **Unique national network** – the ACRE Network (Action with Communities in Rural England) enables us to impact nationally and work collaboratively at a variety of geographic levels.
- **Diverse income sources** – recognised for our ability to deliver, we are not dependent on any one source of income.
- **Deep partnerships** – the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE), led by Newcastle University, the Rural Design Centre, and our neighbouring ACRE Network colleagues are strong partners for CAN, enhancing the benefits we can deliver to rural Northumberland.
- **Delivery and impact** – above all else, we deliver. Highlights over the year include:



Village halls. We led a £1.5 million Community Spaces Partnership delivering capital investment and wraparound support to community buildings.

Employability. As public funds diminished, we subsidised the operation of our Employment Hubs providing critical outreach to unemployed and economically inactive rural residents.

Housing. We delivered a Rural Housing Enabler service supporting small scale rural affordable housing projects, and we supported the transition of Communities Can (North East) to an independent organisation supporting community-led housing regionwide.



Digital Inclusion. On the back of investment in Northumberland's fibre communications network, and in partnership with NICRE, we began to develop a network of digital champions to support local residents make the most of the digital world.

Warm Hubs. 46 Warm Hubs were supported to operate as safe, warm and friendly venues in which to enjoy the company of other people and benefit from energy advice.



Volunteering. We supported the development of effective volunteering across rural Northumberland, linking with our rural networks and Employment Hubs.

Energy, fuel poverty & climate action. We have become a leader in rural energy advice and community energy development through initiatives including Northumberland Community Energy Ltd (solar/battery installation at community buildings), delivering the Home Energy Advice North East service in Northumberland and our new CAIRN programme (Climate Action in the Rural Northeast). We also secured funds to implement specific support for Northumberland's off-electricity grid households.



For more information about our activities during 2024/25 and our plans for the future, please view our website or contact info@ca-north.org.uk



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Company No: 7805401 **Charity No:** 1144604

CAN'S FINANCES

2024-25 saw CAN's income and expenditure continue to grow and the staff team expand, despite the ongoing challenging external circumstances.

Previous years' surplus continues to be invested in further activities whilst securing funds from a wide range of external sources over varying periods to reflect our financial strategy.

Our reserves remain healthy and at the level we need to cover redundancy liabilities which consequentially grow as our staff team expands, and other contingencies.

Our key financial relationships with Defra and others have been maintained. Each year a number of funded programmes come to an end, but we continue to diversify our other income with a combination of grant, contract, consultancy and directly earned income representing the continuing strength of our relationships with funders and partners, maintaining robust foundations for subsequent financial years.

In the face of continuing challenges faced by our communities, sincere thanks must go to all our funders for their continued support throughout the year together with our committed and passionate staff and trustees, our members and supporters, all of whom are listed below.

Income and Expenditure Account (year ended 31 March 2025)

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Voluntary Income		Raising Funds	
Donations & legacies	3,145	Cost of generating income	5,361
Other trading activities	26,937		
Investments	2,353		
Grant Income		Charitable Activities	
DEFRA	43,005	Salaries, NI, pension	176,236
Community Foundation	10,000	Project direct costs	688,677
National Lottery Community Fund	52,500	Support costs	9,185
Energy Projects	62,110		
CAIRN	129,230		
LEAD	53,663		
Community Housing Fund	41,758		
Energy Redress	120,190	Governance Costs	
UKSPF	161,175	Salaries, NI, pension	8,661
Rural Housing Enabler (ACRE)	44,544	Administration	2,558
Solar projects (NTCA/TVCA)	119,860	Independent examination	3,360
NCEL	49,693		
NICRE	10,000		
Other	13,680		
Other Income			
NALC	30,000		
Prudhoe Partnership	12,700		
Wingates	3,779		
OilCAN	1,481		
TOTAL INCOME	991,803	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	894,038
		SURPLUS FOR YEAR	97,765

Patron His Grace the Duke of Northumberland

President Lord Curry of Kirkharle CBE

Vice Presidents

Rt Hon Lord Alan Beith; Mrs S E Black MBE; Rev Canon B Burston; Ven R Langley; Mrs S Walker; Dr D Francis

Honorary Treasurer Barrie Hensby

Board of Directors 2024-25

Jean Humphrys (Chair)
Jan Ashdown
Elizabeth Elliott (to 18.11.24)
Valerie Vaughan (to 18.11.24)
Barrie Hensby
Janice Rose (from 18.11.24)

Ven Catherine Sourbut-Groves
Stephanie Ellis (to 25.09.24)
Norman Hooks
Charlotte Wright
Jeremy Philipson (from 18.11.24)

Staff 2024-25

Andrew Beresford: Energy /Climate Action Officer
Andy Dean – Chief Executive Officer
Alan Gerono – Development Officer
Tom Johnston – Communities CAN Coordinator
Tracey Morgan – Community Development Officer
Julia Plinston – Community Development Officer
Anna Revell – Energy Adviser/Climate Action Officer
Margaret Tweddell – Finance & Admin Assistant
Vince Walsh – Rural Housing Enabler

Carol Davison: Finance & Admin Officer
Jake Delacey: Assistant DCRO
Marc Johnson – Community Development Officer
Fiona Knox: NCEL Project Manager
Christine Nicholls – Community Development Officer
Graeme Popay – NALC Chief Officer
Leanne Shipley – Energy Advice/Engagement Officer
Brian Watson – Domestic Carbon Reduction Officer

Marketing Consultant: Carrie Brookes

Work Coaches: Caroline Armstrong, Michelle Awburn, Lisa Douglas, Sarah Sunderland, Tracey Hinton

Members and Supporters 2024-25

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) AF Affinity Ltd Age UK Northumberland Allenheads Trust Ltd Ancroft Memorial Hall J Ashdown The Ballinger Trust Beadnell Womens Institute Rt Hon Lord Beith Birtley Village Hall S E Black MBE Bowsden Village Hall The Breamish Hall Powburn B Burston Capheaton Parish Council Choppington Parish Council CLA North Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation Colwell Village Hall Communities CAN (North East) Ltd Community Energy Fund (CEF) Community Foundation North East Cornhill Village Hall Country Land & Business Association North Craster Community Trust Cresswell Village Hall Crookham Village Hall	Lord Curry or Kirkharle Dalton Village Hall Dept of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Diocese of Newcastle His Grace the Duke of Northumberland Ellington Social Welfare Centre Ellington Village Hall E A Elliott S Ellis The Energy Savings Trust FoNDT Forestry Commission D Francis R Freeman Gateshead Council M Gibbs R Gibbs Gilsland Village Hall Glendale Gateway Trust Mr A Gooding Great Whittington Village Hall Committee Haydon PC Healey PC The Hearth Centre (Horsley) Ltd B Hensby A Hinchcliffe High Forest Community Association
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Hindmarsh Village Hall	Northumberland CVA
N Hooks	Northumberland Federation of Women's Institutes
Horsley WI/Village Hall	Assoc. Nthld Local History Societies
Howick Village Hall Trust	Northumbria Youth
J Humphrys	OilCAN Members
Inspired Energy	Otterburn Memorial Hall
Impact research	Ovingham Reading Room
Impatience ltd	J Phillipson
W D Johnson	Ponteland Memorial Hall
The Joicey Trust	R Poppleton
Jubilee Hall, Newton on the Moor	Prudhoe Community Partnership
The Jubilee Institute, Rothbury	REGEN
Just Giving	Rennington Village Hall
Kirknewton Village Hall Trust	S Richardson
Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall	J Rose
Knarsdale with Kirkhaugh Community Hall	The Rothley Trust
Sir James Knott Trust	K Rushworth
B Langley	Shilbottle Community Hall
Langley Village Hall	Slaley Commemoration Hall
Lesbury Village Hall	C Sourbut-Groves
J F Lewis	South Charlton Village Hall
Longhoughton Community & Sports Centre Trust	Stannington Village Hall
A Lowrie	Stamfordham Village Hall
LSI Energy	Stocksfield Community Association
C G Matthews-Maxwell	H Talbot
Merton Hall Recreation Centre	Tarset Village Hall
Middleton & Todridge Village Hall	Thropton War Memorial Hall
G E Miller	Tees Valley Combined Authority
Mind Active	L Tudor-Snodin
D Morgan	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
N Mundy	United Reformed Church
National Energy Action	Upper Coquetdale Community Transport
The National Lottery Community Fund	V Vaughan
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	Ventient
Netherton War Memorial Hall	Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE)
Netherwitton Village Hall	Wall Village Hall
Netmore solutions	S Walker
Newbrough Parish Council	Wark Mechanics Institute & Town Hall
Newcastle University	West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium
NICRE	Whalton Village Hall
North East Combined Authority	Whittingham Memorial Institute
Northern Gas Networks	Wingates Windfarm Community Fund
NGN VCMA	Workers' Educational Association
Northern Powergrid	C Wright
North Northumberland Village Hall Consortium	Wylam Institute Community Association
Northumberland Assoc of Local Councils	
Northumberland County Council	