



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

Case Study: The Melbreak Communities Action Plan

March 2012

The Melbreak Communities is a cluster of four parishes: Buttermere, Loweswater, Blindbothel and Lorton, situated in the Vale of Lorton in North West Cumbria.

With a total population of 770, the proportion of older people is much higher than for Cumbria as a whole. This reflects both the ageing population and the area's attraction as a retirement destination. Farming and tourism dominate the local economy, but people are also involved in other kinds of work either home-based, in the locality or further afield.

Background

The Melbreak Communities was formed in 2009 to develop a Community Action Plan. Severe flooding in November 2009, followed by extreme weather during two successive winters, challenged our rural community and some residents were very badly affected.

These adverse weather conditions highlighted the need for up to date, easily accessible, local information – one of several issues and priorities which emerged from the consultation.

What has been achieved?

Community Consultation

'Life in the Valley, and the things that really matter to people' inspired our first consultation exercise. Local people, from teenagers and employed people to families and retired people were invited to talk with pupils at Lorton School.

During Autumn 2010 we conducted a Community Survey which revealed a number of local issues and priorities, for example:

- How can we best help each other during extreme weather conditions?
- The availability of a range of social activities in the Valley, catering for all age groups.
- The provision and accessibility of local services; shopping, banks, Post Office etc.
- Looking after our surroundings for everyone's benefit.



Melbreak Communities Action Plan Launch Event

The Melbreak Communities Website

We recruited a local webmaster and launched our website in May 2010. This has become a valuable source of local information with an interactive message board and diary of events.

Up to February 2012, there have been nearly 20,000 page viewings. The busiest time, in August 2011 saw the highest viewing figures with 260 visits on one day alone.

www.melbreakcommunities.org.uk

The Melbreak Communities Action Plan

We launched our Action Plan in December 2011. Its contents are grouped under the following headings: Safety, security and independent living, Housing, Transport, Recreational and social activities and Environment. The Plan has been widely publicised, including a feature on Border TV's 'Lookaround' programme, broadcast on 23rd January 2012.



Consultation Event at the Village Hall



Consultation Exercise with pupils at Lorton School

Community Resilience: An Emergency Plan for the Valley

An open meeting we hosted in March 2011 prompted a group of local volunteers to form a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

The Team is developing an information database which can enable Valley residents to be alerted, informed and assisted in the event of an emergency such as severe weather, aeroplane crash, nuclear incident or power cut.

Getting people together

Opportunities to meet and socialise are very popular. In July 2011 we launched a monthly 'Coffee and Cake' event at the Yew Tree Hall in Lorton. These events are well attended and offer considerable potential as a focus for information exchange and the sale of local goods and services.

The Learning

Engaging with the local school has been a great way of introducing the community planning process. Maintaining a dialogue with other local organisations such as The Loweswater Care Project, which is interested in lake water quality as well as wider community issues, is also important.

ACT champions community and rural issues

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria, Offices O-Q Skirsgill Business Park, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0FA
T: 01228 817224 | www.cumbriaaction.org.uk | info@cumbriaaction.org.uk | Follow us @ACTCumbria
Registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria | Charity Registration Number 1080875 | Company Number 3957858

©ACT 2012. This publication may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as ACTion with Communities in Cumbria copyright and the title of the publication specified.

People want clear information, for example about the ways in which our rivers are managed. We launched an annual meeting with the Environment Agency in November 2011 and will make detailed information, including river gravel monitoring, available via our website.

Timing is critical - getting people together, especially at lambing time or when they're busy with other work or family commitments, can be tricky.

We received funding from the Lake District National Park Authority, Cockermouth Neighbourhood Forum, and ACT. We also receive a modest annual contribution from the local Parish Councils. However, to continue our activity and maintain and develop our website we need further funding.

Contact Details

For more information, please contact:

Coordinator, Penny Poole on Tel: 01900 85722 or Email: penelopepoole@aol.com

Chairman, John Hayton on Tel: 01900 85606 or Email: johnhayton@lake-district.gov.uk

View the plan on the ACT website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what_we_do/community_plans