



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Biodiversity & Communities – Helping them take action**

The major organisations working to improve biodiversity across Cumbria-gathered at Penrith Rugby Club for the Biodiversity & Communities event, the first of its kind in Cumbria.

Alison Gerke, Trust Executive for the event sponsors, Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust (CWMET) welcomed delegates to the event saying “CWMET have supported a wide variety of Biodiversity initiatives across the County over the last ten years. We feel it is important that these projects explore ways of working together and are aware of each others activities for the benefit of both the communities and the wildlife of Cumbria.

“The Trust also continues to support a wide variety of environmental and community projects through an annual grants pot in the region of half a million pounds.”

Speakers from Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT), Eden Rivers Trust, Cumbria Woodlands and Friends of the Lake District gave insights into their work with communities and the links this work has to Cumbria’s Biodiversity Action Plan.

The event gave an opportunity for biodiversity organisations to discuss how they could communicate better with each other in the future and provide a more joined up service, whilst also delivering the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan objectives. Lune Rivers Trust said “a very inspiring day”: and John Muir Awards commented “Thanks for a very useful day providing information and network opportunities”

Delegates also heard about Community Led Planning, a process where communities themselves carry out wide consultation to develop action plans for their future based on the needs and aspirations of those who live there. Workshops at the event looked at how biodiversity organisations could use the Community Led Planning process as a tool to engage and work with communities and also how to best support communities who find they have biodiversity issues in their area.

Graham Jackson-Pitt Local Biodiversity Manager based at Cumbria Wildlife Trust commented “In recent years there has been a realisation by conservation bodies of the need to share biodiversity and build it into the day-to-day life of not just tourism, planning, business and industry but also the general public.

“In order to deliver the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan and halt biodiversity decline it is vital that we bring it together with communities for mutual benefit”.

Helen Knowles, Biodiversity at Community Buildings Officer for ACT who co-ordinated the event said “The day proved to be very successful, with support expressed for it to become an annual event. I would really like to hear from any other organisations who would be interested in attending future events or from any communities groups which have biodiversity projects that they wish to develop”.

Helen Knowles can be contacted on Tel: 01768 869537 Email: [helenknowles@cumbriaaction.org.uk](mailto:helenknowles@cumbriaaction.org.uk) or contact Graham Jackson-Pitt on Tel: 01539 816300 Email: [biodiversity@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:biodiversity@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk)

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### Photo:



(Clockwise from top left) Helen Knowles - ACT Biodiversity Officer, Hellen Aitken - ACT Development Officer, Becky Helm - Eden River's Trust Education Officer, Roe Baker - ACT Open Green Spaces Project Officer, Izzy Thorne - Cumbria Wildlife Trust Education and Volunteer Officer, Alison Gerke – CWMET Trust Executive.

### **Further press information available from:**

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### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **Action with Communities in Cumbria**

(Previously known as Voluntary Action Cumbria)

- ACT is Cumbria's Rural Community Council and a registered charity.
- ACT is working with people and communities to improve the quality of life in rural Cumbria.
- ACT is an independent organisation able to work with a wide range of partners on an open and equitable basis.
- Established in 1948, for 60 years ACT has been supporting communities that are socially, economically and environmentally vibrant where the needs of all are considered.
- To find out more information, please visit ACT's website: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)