



*north west  
together we can*



**action**  
with communities  
in cumbria



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Issued 7 April 2009**

### **Conference shows commitment to Cumbria's communities**

Over 120 delegates from councils and charities across the North West region met in Kendal recently to discuss "Empowerment in Action"; sharing experience of working with communities at grass roots level and particularly learning about the use of community led planning.

The event, organised by Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) on behalf of Cumbria Rural Forum, the Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CIEP) and North West Together We Can looked at the issue of community empowerment from a range of perspectives, from national policy to local good practice.

Opening the conference were Gillian Bishop of the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, Sylvia Brown of Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and Cllr Barbara Cannon of Cumbria County Council. Their joint message concerned the increasing importance, being put by Government, on councils engaging more effectively with local people and giving them a key place in discussions about the things that affect their area.

Sylvia Brown underlined the widespread use of community led planning, a process where communities develop action plans for their future, based on the needs and aspirations of those who live there. Ms Brown highlighted community led planning as an effective tool for meeting the Government's expectations while Cllr Cannon challenged delegates to recognise that elected members must form a vital part of any arrangements that seek to give communities a greater influence over decision-making.

Later speakers and a programme of workshops allowed delegates to share and learn from good practice of community involvement in both rural and urban areas. This included experiences of Neighbourhood Managers from South Workington and Liverpool, and Development Officers from ACT, Cheshire Community Action and Community Futures in Lancashire, working with rural communities across the North West.

Peter Ridgway, Chair of CIEP and Chief Executive of South Lakeland District Council said "This has been an invaluable opportunity to look at ways in which we can work better with our communities. It is now important to put this approach into practice but, perhaps more importantly, to hear from local people about what would make a real difference for them."

During the Conference, ACT announced the establishment of a Cumbria Community Led Planning Network which will meet for the first time on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. Roger Roberts, ACT Chief Executive, said the network will "provide a regular opportunity for public and third

sector officers and members to share experience and promote better community engagement in the County.”

For more information, please contact Dani Hudson at ACT on 01768 869511 or email [danihudson@cumbriaaction.org.uk](mailto:danihudson@cumbriaaction.org.uk)

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**Photo:**



L-R: Gillian Bishop, Chief Executive, North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership  
Peter Ridgway, Chief Executive, South Lakeland District Council  
Alison Roylance-White, Chief Executive, Cheshire Community Action  
Rob Hindle, Rural Innovation,  
Sylvia Brown, Chief Executive, Action with Communities in Rural England,  
Mark Fyer, Neighbourhood Manager, South Workington Neighbourhood Management  
Front: Barbara Cannon, Acting Portfolio Holder for Acting for Communities, Cumbria County Council

**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)

## **Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CIEP)**

CIEP has been set up by Cumbria's local authorities as part of a national initiative to make local government more efficient. Its main priorities are to drive improvement in the ways that local authorities deliver:

- Transformational Government and the citizen
- Efficiency
- Economic Development & Regeneration
- Health and Social Care
- Community Safety
- Community empowerment and Neighbourhood delivery
- Children and Young Peoples Services
- Environmental quality and climate change
- Cohesion equalities and diversity

To find out more information, please visit: [www.ciep.org.uk](http://www.ciep.org.uk)

## **North West Together We Can**

North West Together We Can has been established as a regional 'learning network' for local authority practitioners and policy-makers who are keen to explore issues of community engagement and active citizenship.

To find out more information, please visit: [www.nwtwc.org.uk](http://www.nwtwc.org.uk)