



The Gazette: Community Action Plans

Issue 5: Winter 2007



A note from the Editor

‘A rose by any other name would smell as sweet’

Some people are doing Parish Plans, some are doing Community Plans and some are doing Town Plans. In the past your parish might even have done a Village Appraisal. The name's not important, as the process of carrying out an appraisal and producing an action plan at the end of it is still the same.

The term ‘Parish Plan’ emerged from the Countryside Agency's Vital Village's Programme in 2001. but more recently the term Community Plan has started to be used; some communities feel that the name ‘parish’ will confuse people and they'll assume that it's a church-led project. Others think that the term ‘community’ is more inclusive for parishes that have both rural and urban areas in them. In other cases the plans don't cover parish boundaries and extend over a number of parishes in a ‘cluster’.

The name ‘Community Action Plan’ and ‘Community Led Plan’ are now starting to be used too. These emphasise that the plan is a starting point for local people to take action to bring about change and to safeguard the things they care about.

Echoing the sentiment of the Shakespeare quote above, at the end of the day it doesn't matter what it's called as long as it works!

Thank you. *Carl Glynn* Editor



What's inside this issue

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- ❖ **Rhetoric to Reality** Sustainable Rural Services Conference
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Pathways of Influence

VAC's research funded by the Carnegie UK Trust

Since the report in our Spring issue, VAC's work to identify practical steps in which communities, through their Community Action Plan activity, can achieve greater influence with public sector partners, has gone well.

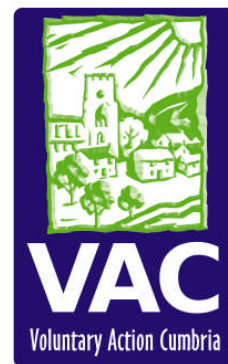
There have been three meetings of our action learning set; a group of people with experience of community planning from the community or the public sector perspective. The discussions have identified three key elements of the Community Action Plan process that need to be in place if upward influencing is to be successful:

- ✓ Elected members need to know about the activity that is under way, have an opportunity to participate if they wish and have an opportunity to hear about draft conclusions and proposed actions before the plans are finalised. This gives your elected representatives an opportunity to work within and influence the District or County council on your behalf.
- ✓ Community planning groups need to be informed about the issues that are strategic priorities for the Local Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships. Thinking about these priorities during planning activity can help to make sure that at least some of your ideas and proposals will complement things that the public sector is doing.
- ✓ Consulting with the local authority and other public service providers when you have reached initial conclusions about local issues and priorities is essential. This can help both you and them think about the practical actions that can be taken to deal with the issues, without setting off on action planning with unrealistic expectations.

Dialogue at this stage is also an opportunity to build commitment within the public sector to support at least some of your anticipated actions.

Having identified these key points locally, we are now working with colleagues from Lancashire and Cheshire to develop improved advice and guidance to both communities and their public sector partners.

We hope that this will improve the way in which local authorities and others respond to community planning activity and improve the pathways through which communities can influence the organisations that serve them.



Rhetoric to Reality - A Future for Rural Services?

On Wednesday 28th November, over 80 people gathered at Melmerby NEW Village Hall to discover the real experience of communities after the loss of a rural service.

As part of the Sustainable Rural Services project, the Conference was all about how a loss of a rural service, such as a shop, GP surgery or post office affects rural communities.

Workshops focused on different ways to tackle changes in services, including developing community enterprises and working with local councillors. We also had presentations from national and regional experts, and from local communities.

We hope that Dr Stuart Burgess, the Government's Rural Advocate, will take back some of the key messages from the day, and continue to represent the need for fairer access to services in rural areas.





Do Community Plans Make a Difference?

As Rural Community Officers we spend a lot of our time supporting Parishes to carry out community plans and encouraging those interested in starting them. One question we're often asked is "Will it really make a difference to our community?" It seemed an important question to answer, so a brief survey out to 14 parishes in South Cumbria that had completed community plans. Eight parishes replied.

They provided us with some useful information and their experiences were very similar. They had all completed their plans between 2002 and 2004 and so had had at least two years to get projects from their action plans underway.

The good news is that **all** of them had made progress with getting their action plan off the ground and a wide-range of successful projects had been started including; new societies, recreational activities and neighbourhood watch schemes, recycling facilities improved and better communication within the community including new websites and newsletters.

The bad news is that, unsurprisingly, there were some sticking points, especially with those projects that were outside the immediate control of the Parish Council; particularly highways issues. Other hitches have included getting hold of project funding, or practical problems such as not being able to find land for a new car park.

Recently we've been tackling some of these problems by getting Community Plan groups to work more closely with local authorities from the start of the process so that they have a better idea of what's possible and how to make their projects happen.

Overall the experience was definitely positive and benefits included:

- *"The Council is better able to represent the electors because it is more aware of the community's views and concerns. Motivating the Council to be a bit more proactive in identifying what it should be doing (instead of merely reacting to approaches)."*
- *"Input from everyone not just the famous few. People know what is happening and what progress is being made. Knowledge of where parish money is being spent. Generally the Parish Council is now more high profile."*
- *"Making the Parish Council more viable and accountable. Better communication within our widespread community"*
- *"It has shown to local people that we care about their views and are prepared to take action to get things done to improve life in the parish. It has helped the Parish Council's decision making process as they now know the wishes of the electorate on a range of issues."*

Despite struggling with some of the more ambitious projects none of the Parishes regretted putting together a Community Plan or felt it had been a waste of time. All thought that both the Parish Council and the wider community had benefited from the process.

For more information about the survey contact Julia Wilson, Rural Community Officer for South Lakeland and Furness, Tel: 01768 869524
Email: juliawilson@ruralcumbria.org.uk





Examples of Successful Projects Arising From Community & Parish Plans

Listed below are examples of Community & Parish Plan success across Cumbria. Many of the projects which needed funding were supported in their applications by the evidence provided by their Plan.

Each community will have different needs and ideas about what they want to achieve from completing a Community & Parish Plan, and how to implement the actions within it. This list is by no means exhaustive!

Howgate Cluster (Lowca, Moresby, Parton)

- Major improvements to the Back Lanes in Moresby
- Field Path opened at Church Brow
- Successful Youth Club in Parton
- Continued liaison and joint working between the 3 parishes. The group now includes Distington, who also have a plan.

Burgh by Sands

- Shopping bus service
- Village design statement adopted by Carlisle City Council
- Parish Councilors with 'portfolios' focusing on areas such as transport, village hall, village green

Broughton

- Parish Council developed good relationships with Local Authorities and Police
- Formation of Rural Safety Group
- Traffic calming at Broughton School
- UK Coal landscaped open cast site; extensive planting and creation of lakes, ponds and wet lands
- Overhead cables buried including BT cables

Askham & Ireleth

- Youth Council formed
- 'Dreamscheme' set up and plan helped to employ a support worker
- Nursery & After School facilities introduced
- Landscaping projects carried out in the village

Little Clifton

- 'The Mushroom Project' youth group set up
- Quarterly Parish Council Newsletter
- Installation of new litter bins
- 'Community Area' for use by all residents

Ousby, Ainstable, Culgaith, Lazonby

Used their plans to access funding for the Fellrunners village bus service which bought:

- New family incentive travel scheme
- New route serving small rural villages
- New low floor accessible bus

Wasdale

As part of the Community & Parish Plan process the community:

- Put together an information pack
- Had a village clear up
- Received grant aid for an environmental project

St John's Castlerigg & Wythburn

- Creation of Young Farmers Group
- Taxi vouchers granted from Allerdale Borough Council
- United Utilities tree felling project around Thirlmere Lake
- Increased Village Hall bookings
- Heritage Group formed to help support & maintain heritage buildings
- New gates and bridges for local footpath, good relationship with Local National Park Ranger





Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Action Planning Workshops

"Many thanks"

"Thank you – a very useful workshop."

"Very interesting and useful information."

"Very clear and enjoyable."

Actually, in this case, the Actions produced loud words of praise! Above are just a few of the comments from the recent Community & Parish Plan Action Planning Workshops, which seem to have been a huge success.

We held four workshops, in Levens (South Lakes), Underskiddaw (Allerdale), Holmrook (Copeland) and Crosby Ravensworth (Eden), with more than sixty people attending in total, representing twenty-five different communities.

With the help of members of VAC's Community Team, participants worked through exercises designed to give them practical, hands on experience of drafting a good, realistic and powerful Action Plan.

The favourite aspects of the Action Planning Workshops were:-

- Looking at examples of other Action Plans
- Actual Action Planning on specific local issues
- The emphasis on 'actions' rather than 'statements' in Action Plans
- Group discussion

The evaluation sheets gave us some valuable feedback, and we were delighted to note that 94% of participants rated the delivery of the workshop 'good' or 'very good'.

From our point of view, it was great to see so many people getting involved in activities and discussions. It was even better to see community planning groups helping to solve each other's problems, and sharing what they'd learned along the way.

Watch for more Community Action Planning workshops in 2008 and make sure you don't miss out on a great opportunity to learn with other community planning groups.



The Twelve Days of Community Planning!

The production of a representative, realistic and suitably ambitious Community Action Plan can be a long and sometimes fraught process.

We believe many of you will recognise some of the 'gifts' below...

(It really works best if you sing it!)

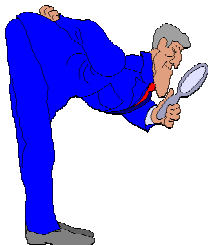
On the twelfth day of Christmas,

My True Love gave to me:

Twelve months of meetings,
Eleven leaders listening,
Ten points of action,
Nine groups a-working,
Eight presentations,
Seven sheets of survey,
Six Councillors counselling,
Five Pro-to-cols! (Well, nearly)
Four working drafts,
Three Council tiers,
Two grand from Defra,
And a brand new Community Plan!

VAC would also like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!





The Who's Who of Community Action Plans

Here is the list of Parishes that have completed or are currently undertaking (marked with *) a Community Action Plan. We have included the year each plan was produced and also referenced in brackets those Parishes who have worked together to produce 'cluster' plans. Sharing skills and knowledge is important, and is something that VAC encourages all Parishes to do. If you see a nearby Parish, or one that is similar to yours on this list, do get in touch, but remember that all communities are unique and that a process that worked in one community might not always work in another. If your Parish is involved in the Community Action Plan process and isn't listed here, please contact me.

Allerdale (22/60 parishes)	Barrow (1/3 parishes)	Carlisle (23/35 parishes)
Allhallows 2003	Askam & Ireleth 2003	Arthuret*
Allonby*		Beaumont*
Blennerhasset & Torpenhow 2006		Brampton (Brampton) 2005
Borrowdale 2004		Burgh-by-Sands 2002
Bothel & Threapland 2003		Burtholme (Brampton) 2005
Bowness-on-Solway 2004		Carlatton & Cumrew*
Bridekirk 2003-07		Castle Carrock & Geltsdale (Brampton) 2005
Brigham 2003		Cummersdale*
Broughton 2002-07		Cumwhitton 2004
Caldbeck 2005-15		Dalston 2005
Camerton 2005		Farlam (Brampton) 2005
Dearham 2003-08		Hayton (Brampton) 2005
Gilcrux 2003		Hethersgill 2006
Kirkbampton*		Irthington (Brampton) 2005
Kirkbride 2005		Kingmoor*
Little Clifton 2005		Kirkandrews*
Maryport 2004-11		Nether Denton (Brampton) 2005
Plumbland 2004		Orton 2005
St John's, Castlerigg & Wythburn 2004		Stanwix Rural 2007
Thursby 2004-09		Upper Denton (Brampton) 2005
Underskiddaw 2007		Walton 2007
Westward 2007		Waterhead 2006
		Wetheral 2005

Legend

- ❖ The dates next to the parish names indicate when the plan was produced, and where provided the date it's due for renewal.
- ❖ Plans that have been produced in a 'cluster' are listed individually, with the cluster indicated in brackets.
- ❖ UECP = Upper Eden Community Plan

Do you have a Community or Parish website?

VAC is expanding its directory of Parish and Community websites. Visit www.ruralcumbria.org.uk/clinks to check if there is a link to your local website. If not, please contact Carl Glynn carlglenn@ruralcumbria.org.uk





Un-Tapping the Potential of Village Shops

This is a challenging time for many of our village shops in Cumbria. With increased competition from supermarkets, particularly home delivery services, internet shopping and uncertainty over Post Office services, some businesses are facing failure and others have already closed. These closures have a big impact on our rural communities.

Research carried out by VAC has found that people value shops and Post Offices as a meeting place as well as for the goods and services they provide; they have to travel more and those without their own cars lose choice and independence.

BUT many shops have untapped potential and, with a bit of support and encouragement, can meet these challenges. A new partnership has been set up in Cumbria to do this. VAC has joined with a number of other local organisations, including local councils and business support organisations, to form the Rural Retail Advisory Partnership for Cumbria.

The first task has been to find out where our rural retail businesses are and what they do. Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency have been doing this work on our behalf and are in the process of finding out what help and support village shops want and need. The next stage is to offer one to one support to a selection of businesses and a series of networking events that are open to many.

The spring issue of The Gazette featured an article on 'community owned' village shops and the support that is available to them from VAC and the Village Retail Services Association (ViRSA).

It featured examples of communities 'doing it for themselves' and mentioned that Nenthead, Witherslack and Hesket Newmarket were working to set up their own shops.

The Nenthead Community Shop opened for business on 1st November 2007 and is about to have an official opening where the oldest resident will 'cut the ribbon'. VAC would like to congratulate all involved in making this happen and wish the venture every success for the future.

If you would like to know more about the support that is available to village shops then please contact Lorraine Rockminster, Community Enterprise Officer at VAC on Tel: 01768 869517 or email: lorrainerockminster@ruralcumbria.org.uk



I Hate Long Goodbyes...

.... So we'll keep this short and sweet. After over six years with VAC, working all over the County at one time or another, it's time to move on. Leaving VAC will be hard, not least because of all the wonderful (and sometimes challenging!) times with so many Community Planning groups.

I'm leaving the sector, but I'm not leaving Cumbria. I've taken a post with Cumbria Primary Care Trust to do Public Engagement work in Carlisle and Eden Districts. I very much hope this means I'll be seeing familiar faces in the future.

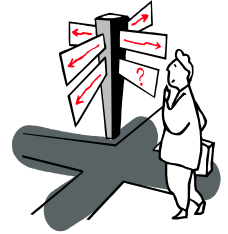
To those I've worked with, thank you for listening, arguing, working and laughing, and thank you for caring enough about your community to want to make a difference.

Anna Scamans





Useful contacts at **VAC**



The Community Team

If you have any queries on Community & Parish Plans, please contact us:

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How would you like to receive 'The Gazette' in the future?

Most of you will have received this copy of 'The Gazette' by post. In future, those contacts for whom we have email addresses, will receive it by email, as before. If you would like to continue to receive this by post, however, please do contact Carl Glynn (details above) to let us know.



Visit our website to find out what's happening around Community Action Plans, to view completed Plans, and also to download previous copies of The Gazette.

www.ruralcumbria.org.uk

Glossary of terms

- **Cluster** Neighbouring communities, either settlements or Parishes, grouping together to produce a joint Community Action Plan
 - **Community Action Plan**
 - **Community Led Planning**
 - **Community & Parish Plan**
- } Interchanging terminology for the same process.

