

# Annual Review 2014/15



**ACTion**  
with communities  
in cumbria

# Annual Review 2014/15

## ACTion with communities in cumbria

champions community and rural issues



Registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria  
Charity No. 1080875      Company No. 3957858

*Cover photo Chapel Stile by Tom Wilson*

## ACT champions community and rural issues

We help people and communities achieve their aspirations and make their areas better places to live. We're particularly active in rural areas and among communities affected by economic, social, or environmental disadvantage. We support communities by:

- Providing practical advice and support
- Delivering training, events and producing case studies for community groups and social enterprises
- Representing the interests of communities locally, and nationally and raising awareness of local needs.
- Linking together local people and the agencies and authorities that have an impact on their daily lives

If you want to support rural communities, keep up to date with our work or benefit from our services, please become an ACT supporter; it's free!

[www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

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## Chair's Introduction

Our dedicated team has had a productive and positive year. We've moved to new premises better suited for our size and purpose and have had some success in maintaining our funding base.

The run up to the national election saw us challenging the Cumbria Parliamentary candidates to commit to a focus on rural issues. We are keenly aware that incremental reductions in resources are having a cumulative and damaging impact on individuals and communities.

This is particularly true in rural areas where resources are stretched and many services are owned and supported by volunteers.

Cumbria needs strong rural communities. And it's our job to support them.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and take heart from the vitality of the community activity it celebrates.

In signing off, I want to acknowledge the passing of John Trotter, a long time supporter and past trustee. John was a 'true gentleman' and a dedicated volunteer with our organisation for over thirty years. We are the stronger for his past service.

**Des O'Halloran** - ACT Chairperson



# ACT Champions Community and Rural Issues



ACT CEO, Lorraine Smyth and Daniel Heery from Cyber Moor taking part in the Digital Health Strategy Workshop at Cumbria University in Carlisle

## Cumbria Rural Health Forum

ACT sits on the Management Group of this Forum which works to maximise the health of rural communities through devising:

‘evidence-based strategies, best-practice, tools and techniques that support the effective and efficient delivery of public health and health and social care in rural areas’.

The Forum, led by the University of Cumbria, facilitates a network of professionals and has developed a Digital Health Strategy. This provides leadership in developing common themes around rurality and identifying what ‘good looks like’ in delivering rural health.

You can find out more here: [www.ruralhealthlink.co.uk](http://www.ruralhealthlink.co.uk)

## Transport for Rural Health – Research

ACT and the Cumbria Rural Forum researched this issue in response to anecdotal evidence of challenges for rural patients in accessing health appointments. The research results identified a need for additional services and more information. We are now working with Cumbria Community Transport Forum, the Cumbria Clinical Commission and Cumbria County Council to design additional practical and sustainable solutions.



## Affordable Warmth Briefings

Affordable warmth is the solution to Fuel Poverty. ACT produced three briefings looking at aspects of fuel poverty in Cumbria; the causes, effects and solutions for individual homes and communities.

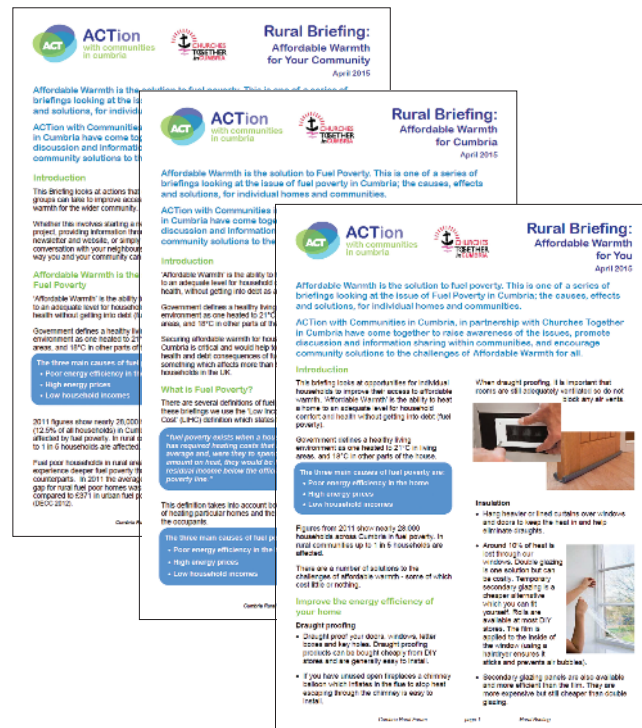
ACT, in partnership with Churches Together in Cumbria, is raising awareness of the issues, promoting discussion and information sharing within communities, and encouraging community solutions to the challenges of affordable warmth for all.

A community group member commented:

'I got this by email and immediately realised I could save money on my family bills by switching my energy provider and managing energy use differently. I told lots of friends and encouraged them to do the same'.

Churches Together in Cumbria are spreading the word through the varied congregations across Cumbria, encouraging church groups to take action to support those less able to do so.

Events in Autumn 2015 will continue this work with sharing of experiences and more promotion of self help and community-led solutions.



The three Rural Briefings were circulated in the Spring of 2015 and are available on the ACT website

Visit our website at: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

# Supporting Communities to plan for their Future



Raising awareness of Community Emergency Planning with residents at Garrigill Village Hall

## Community Emergency Planning

Are you ready for the unexpected? How would you cope in an emergency?

A few minutes thinking about it now could make a big difference to the outcome of an emergency faced by you, your family, and your community.

ACT is working to promote community preparedness in extreme weather emergencies for the Sustain Eden partnership, managed by Cumbria Action for Sustainability. This year we have:

- Worked with Alston and the surrounding communities supporting their development of an emergency plan.
- Supported activities and provided information at Yanwath School, with Penrith Chamber of Trade, with Resident and Tenants groups across Eden.
- Produced a new template for smaller communities that assist them to record the way they will approach an emergency situation.

We suggest all communities involved in any community planning should assess their resilience to emergencies at the same time.

## Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced through the 2011 Localism Act and focuses solely on spatial planning issues i.e. the use of land and buildings. Neighbourhood Planning is led by the community but requires expert professional advice and support. It is a statutory process involving external examination and assessment.

A number of communities have requested clarification of the various types of community-led plans. In response ACT:

- Ran a workshop with the Cumbria Association of Local Councils to explore the differences between a Community Led Plan and a Neighbourhood Plan and how they can complement each other.
- Produced a Guidance Sheet with CALC about this and worked with Eden District Council on their active promotion of Neighbourhood Planning and also managed their small grants fund for the start up costs of communities doing a Neighbourhood Plan.

As a statutory process, Neighbourhood Planning is a serious undertaking but it can reap rewards for the community helping them be heard on development in their area.



Community Led Planning and Neighbourhood Planning workshop at Bolton Village Hall

Visit our website at: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

# Supporting Communities to Develop their Projects



It's free!

## Village SOS

This is a two-year, UK-wide, Lottery funded campaign to enable rural communities to:

- share expertise and knowledge
- keep communities alive and thriving
- help them to become more enterprising and
- with the support of people who have already done it themselves.

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and the network of 38 rural community councils (of which ACT is the Cumbrian body) leads on Village SOS activity in England.

ACT has promoted the scheme to the 3,000+ people we support across rural Cumbria, encouraging them to share their expertise, learn from others and start new projects including the following:

- A community building asset transfer
- A business plan for a community building rebuild
- A potential community buy-out of a local pub
- A public toilet transfer of ownership.

The project will continue into 2016. Find out more on our website or visit the national website:

[www.villagesos.org.uk/](http://www.villagesos.org.uk/)



## Community Buildings Support

One of our most valued services is the Community Buildings Service. ACT uses funding from Defra, several district council service level agreements and an investment from our own reserves to fund this work with community groups who manage these locally owned assets.

The Community Buildings Service offers:

- Telephone/email support for any enquiry
- Free Village Hall Information Sheets produced by ACRE
- The ACT Gazette, which includes local and national community building and village hall information
- A voice for issues affecting community buildings and village halls at a national level via ACRE
- 3 half-day training seminars per year
- Bespoke charged-for support for individual groups (membership discounts and local bursaries apply)
- Free web page for your hall on the ACT website

This year ACT worked with 146 Community Building Groups and supported three applications to the National Loans fund, managed by ACRE and funded by DEFRA.



Community Buildings Event at the ACT Annual General Meeting in September 2014

Visit our website at: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

# Supporting Communities to Work with Others



Community Emergency Planning Conference at The Stoneybeck Inn near Penrith

## Community Resilience

ACT facilitates the Cumbria Community Resilience Network - a working group of the statutory Local Resilience Forum and the place where community and statutory bodies co-ordinate their approaches to Community Emergency Planning in Cumbria. In October 2014 the Community Resilience Network held a Conference at Stoneybeck near Penrith.

The conference validated and celebrated Community Emergency Planning across the County. Over half the conference delegates represented communities who have developed or wish to develop a community emergency plan. Outcomes for the day included:

- Over 100 Cumbrian residents coming together to consider community responses and preparedness for emergencies
- 33 communities celebrating their involvement in emergency planning
- 6 Community Emergency Plans peer reviewed against a scenario and validated
- ACT launching new guidance for smaller communities wanting to write their own plan

For more information visit our website.

## Social Enterprise

ACT has delivered Start Up and Business Support to community groups and new entrepreneurs on a contract from the Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership (CSEP). This work is delivered in a consortium, managed by Wingspan Consulting Ltd.

CSEP has played an important role in assisting the community and voluntary sector to be involved in the next round of European funds and particularly the European Social Fund which focuses predominately on skill development.

ACT sits on the Steering Group for CSEP and assisted at this year's AGM with a workshop on sustainability.

ACT encourages all community organisations that generate income to see themselves as a social enterprise and to work towards a balanced budget where their income makes a significant contribution to their costs. In the case of village halls this is about their hiring charges, whereas for service organisations it is about having an effective charging policy.

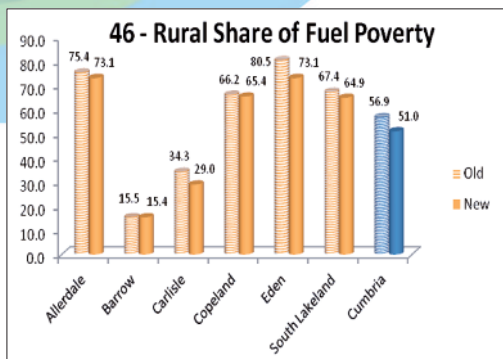
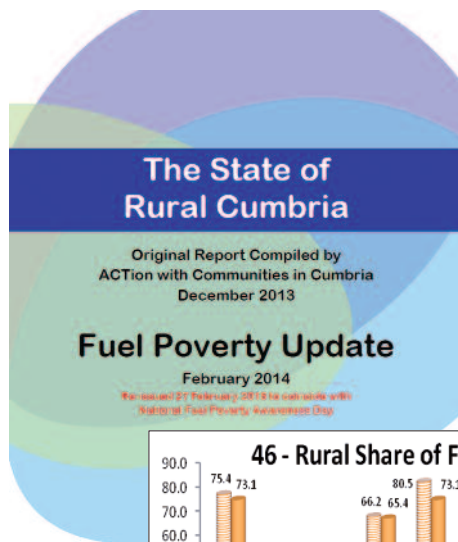
Through our contracts with local authorities and others, ACT has assisted 218 enterprises this year.

We will continue working with CSEP to exert a rural influence on the new Social Investment Fund, European funds and deliver tailored support for small rural and community enterprises.



Libby Graham from Northern Fells Project and Daniel Heery from Alston Cybermoor presenting to the Sustainability Workshop facilitated by Lorraine Smyth - ACT CEO

# Supporting Communities to Influence and Change Policy



Detail from the Fuel Poverty Update issued in Feb 2015

## 'State of Cumbria' Issues

ACT has featured issues from the State of Rural Cumbria report in the Gazette. The report was produced with data from the parish profiles we have on our website. Key rural issues are:

- An ageing population - which is 4% above the UK average, and 58% of this population is rural
- Too few young people - 2% lower than the national average of 19%
- Disadvantage - 36% of people in income disadvantage live in rural areas
- Health - 47% of those with limiting long-term illnesses live in rural areas
- Rural living - including issues of fuel poverty, housing affordability and working from home.

The Gazette featured case studies on how communities have used their assets to address some of these challenges.

We also produced an updated briefing on fuel poverty using the Government's new definition which covers income as well as heating cost. We produced this to coincide with National Fuel Poverty Awareness Day in February 2015.



## Twitter - a new tool for rural advocacy

Rural life has many issues that can be promoted and advocated on. Using Twitter, ACT needs to be mindful that we are an apolitical organisation, as well as considering the effectiveness of the tool.

ACT tweets and re-tweets most days and our Twitter feed updates simultaneously on the ACT website. Our Twitter followers often re-tweet the Gazette and other items of interest making our reach much broader.

We have tweeted on:

- Minimum Practice Guarantee for rural GP's surgeries
- Increased charges for 16-18 year olds school transport
- Advice on current policy and access to funding
- Promoting national support such as Pub is the Hub
- Job and volunteering opportunities
- Promotion of consultations, particularly encouraging a rural response
- Health information and opportunities to become involved
- Local events and calls for assistance from others
- Circulating our events and information sheets



ACT CEO Lorraine Smyth using Social Media to advocate and influence on rural issues

Visit our website at: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

# Resources for Communities



ACT can provide access to 44 Village Hall information and Guidance Sheets for the 300+ community buildings in Cumbria. These are updated nationally by ACRE - the national network co-ordinator for Rural Community Councils.

We use these sheets to provide accessible, straight forward guidance to many of the Village Hall enquiries we receive. Issues covered include:

- Entertainment in Village Halls
- Health and Hygiene in Village Halls
- Village Hall Flooring
- Accounting in Village Halls
- Sale of Goods in Village Halls

We produce our own guidance to meet repeat enquiries, when we have researched the issue and can provide a useful summary. One of our favourites is: Making the most of your village hall - Are you charging enough? It is packed full of useful information!

We also have several village hall case studies on our website and regularly publish press releases on national and local issues for community buildings.

## What Communities say about us

*'Thank you so much for all the information you sent me. It was exactly what I needed. I have shared it with my fellow Committee Members (Trustees!) so that we can decide how to proceed.'*

*'Thank you for all your help and support. Definitely could not have got to where we are now without your help and support.'*

*'A BIG thank you for coming to last night's meeting and making sure that there was an unbiased debate'.*

*'The ACT website is invaluable'.*

*'You were superb. Thank you.'*

*'The session was useful to get us all on the same page, appreciating our opportunities and challenges'.*

*'Many thanks for your expert help'.*

*'Your presentations are very clear and the handouts top quality and very useful'.*



ACT Staff (L-R) Julia Wilson, Lorraine Smyth, Dani Hudson, Hellen Aitken

Visit our website at: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

# ACT Trustees and Funders



ACT is a membership organisation and a company limited by guarantee. ACT has a Management Board of no less than eight and up to twelve individuals, who are called trustees. They are elected annually at the ACT AGM usually in September.

Profiles of our Trustees and President are available on the ACT website.

The ACT Board would like to thank all our funders, members, supporters and staff for their support in 2014/15.

ACT Trustees (L-R) Liz Clegg, Alan McViety, Sue Castle-Clarke, Des O'Halloran (Chairperson), Olive Clarke (Vice-President) Morag Lloyd, Jim Webster, Ron Munby, Lorraine Smyth (CEO), Jolyon Dodgson (President). Ian Payne was unable to attend.

## ACT's Funders in 2014/15

- Allerdale District Council
- AON
- Big Lottery
- Cumbria Action for Sustainability - Sustain Eden
- Copeland Borough Council
- Copeland Community Fund
- Cumbria Chamber of Commerce
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria Third Sector Consortium
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Eden District Council
- European Regional Development Fund
- Hadfield Trust
- Lake District National Park Authority
- South Lakeland District Council
- Wingspan



# Looking Ahead

I find communities to be endlessly creative in using their 'assets' to meet local need, to celebrate and enhance local life, to 'do their bit' to help others live and thrive around them. Resources get tighter and less is available for the 'rural premium' necessary to underpin delivery of public and community services. In rural areas, the challenges of lower population numbers and long travel distances to service centres already make life markedly more expensive.

Using regular research to assess rural needs, ACT is prioritising additional action, alongside our regular work, as follows over the next year:

- Assisting communities to have a voice and be heard, on how their 'assets' and social activities can best be used in supporting people with complex needs

- Looking for creative, community based, sustainable ways to support people's travel needs in getting around in rural areas
- Promoting community solutions to affordable warmth for all
- Assisting rural communities to benefit from the new European funds, available later this year and particularly supporting the LEADER programme to sustain its local approach to rural development
- Promoting rural awareness, inclusive policy making and delivery at local, District, County and National level.

With Rory Stewart, a Cumbrian MP as a Defra Minister, ACT hopes that an incisive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in rural living will become more evident in government policy. Cumbrian rural communities can provide compelling examples of the resilience and asset-based approach that makes rural living successful.

**Lorraine Smyth - ACT CEO**



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# Finance Report

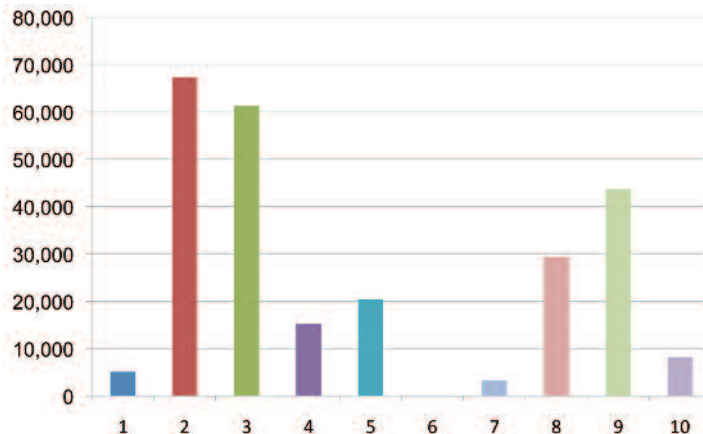
The Board started the year with an intention to invest reserves in our core work. We have undertaken a critical review of our overheads and have been aggressively driving down costs. As part of this, we have moved office, which has reaped significant benefits. We have also secured a number of new, small, additional incomes streams.

This effective management of resources has lead to a positive outturn for the year 2014/15 although the future still remains very challenging.

We are faced with reducing levels of income and are currently exploring ways to increase this, but it is likely we will have to use some our own resources over the coming year.

## Income of the Charity

	2014/15	2013/14
1 Bank Interest	5,099	6,618
2 ACRE	67,300	64,586
3 Local Authority Service Level Agreements	61,250	72,628
4 Big Lottery Sustain Eden (via CCVS - Resilience)	15,200	18,647
5 Rental Income	20,389	16,981
6 Big Lottery - BASIS	0	87,020
7 Health and Well Being	3,232	24,703
8 Miscellaneous	29,342	47,289
9 ACT Investment	43,670	0
10 Other Grants & Donations	8,206	10,342
<b>Totals</b>	<b>253,688</b>	<b>348,814</b>



## Project Delivery

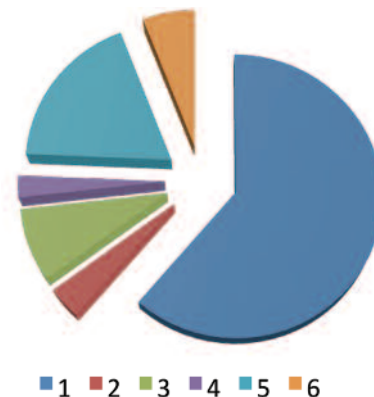
The following chart is a representation of the types of delivery work undertaken by the organisation relative to the costs of the activity.

Strategic Influencing	£59,068
Supporting Communities	£144,065
	<b>£203,133</b>



## Costs Of Charity Activities

	2014/15	2013/14
1 Staff Costs	124,548	£209,669
2 Travel Costs	7,251	£3,711
3 Direct project delivery costs	16,885	£67,962
4 Membership	5,020	£5,115
5 Premises, Office, IT	37,419	£49,247
6 Audit, Legal & Depreciation	12,010	£13,110
	<b>203,133</b>	<b>£348,814</b>



Visit our website at: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

If you have been inspired by this Annual Review we hope you will:

Visit our website to find out more about what we do and how we can help your community.

Join us by becoming a free ACT Supporter or paying ACT Member.

Follow us on Twitter to receive regular news and information about community and rural issues.



Use this QR Code and your smart phone app to go direct to our website.



Twitter

Follow us [@ACTCumbria](https://twitter.com/ACTCumbria)

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