

## **ACT Annual Review 2022 Transcript**

### **Front Page Annual Review 2021/2022**

Welcome to our Annual Review April 2021 to March 2022.

We haven't been out and about as much as we might like due to the pandemic, so for this review we have a selection of Cumbrian views for you.

### **Page 1 Welcome to our Annual Review**

I am Lorraine Smyth the CEO of ACT, I will be taking you through this review.

Here is a message from our chairperson, Joanna Tate:

'Our vice president Olive Clarke OBE, was one hundred recently. We celebrated her centenary with flowers and a donation to her village hall where she has been treasurer for many years.

I want to thank all my fellow trustees, the staff, our many supporters, and our funders for their commitment to making communities across Cumbria better places to live.

We hope you enjoy this select review of our work!'

### **Page 2 ACT's Mission**

ACT Mission is to champion community and rural issues we support communities to Plan for the future, Develop Projects, Work with others and influence and change policy.

We have been doing this since 1948 and 2023 will be our 75th anniversary.

### **Page 3 The Year in Numbers 1**

We work at securing funds for Community projects. Last year we secured £840,000 from the Arts Council for a People and Places Community Arts project in West Cumbria. we also secured significant funding for other projects and community buildings.

We have continued to work online throughout the year and have supported many communities to meet online, keeping people safe and saving carbon from travelling.

### **Page 4 The Year in Numbers 2**

We offer every enquiry a free 30 minute consultation to help them tell us what it is they need.

Our assistance can be offering resources from our website or sending a guidance sheet. But most often it is working with them to clarify what they want to achieve and how best they can do it.  
We often refer people to other organisations if we

### **Page 5 Influencing and Changing Policy 1**

ACT is involved in discussions and projects where we can shape policy based on the needs that communities have told us about

On Fuel Poverty Awareness Day (Dec 2021) we hosted a useful online event with over 40 participants to discuss the scale of Fuel Poor households in Cumbria and what partners can do to support them.

We were invited by The Health Equality Commission to inform their recommendations on wellbeing in rural places. We built our discussion with them on a range of events we held about rural housing projects, in Cumbria, and further afield.

### **Page 6 Influencing and Changing Policy 2**

We are advising the Town Fund Boards in Cleator Moor and Millom on governance and engagement

We encouraged and supported the Windermere Master Plan group to hold a Citizen Panel to inform future engagement around water quality in the Windermere catchment area. The Citizens Panel would have been unlikely to happen without our promotion and is an example of encouraging partners to hear community voices.

### **Page 7 Planning for the Future 1**

Our work helps communities to develop plans and ideas on a range of issues a number of people have been kind enough to provide comment on our work:

‘I’m definitely going to go use some of the lines Zosia wrote for the Solway Nature recovery plan... Using poetry was a really useful and interesting approach ‘

‘I pick up all sorts of good information at the Community led housing forum... there is space for me to ask questions and share ideas’

‘ACT’s contribution was, as always, much valued in developing the plans for our village housing project’

### **Page 8 Planning for the Future 2**

We are working to support communities to plan for the green transition and a just, zero carbon future. Rural community are uniquely challenged to reduce carbon as so many of their needs are met by driving to services. Innovative and creative solutions are being put in place to manage this.

ACT carried out some research on housing with our supporters: the results of which highlighted the severe challenges with finding affordable rental properties in Cumbria, and informed a discussion in Parliament

Affordable local housing to buy or rent is vital ingredient for a sustainable community. this is very long term work for communities that we are continuing to invest in supporting.

### **Page 9 Supporting Project Development 1**

Communities sincerely appreciate our community buildings expertise, that we have developed over many years. some of the feedback we have received is below:

‘The regular Community Building Events highlight key topics and provide networking. There are many daunting problems for all of us ahead but help is at hand with the ACT team.’

‘I had no idea that such a great source of support was available from ACT. In addition to our successful fundraising, we also now have excellent policies and procedures.’

‘The staff at ACT are so helpful... If in doubt about the way forward with village hall related problems our first port of call is always ACT.’

you can find out more about how this service has been delivered this year on our website through the link below.

### **Page 10 Supporting Project Development 2**

We are very grateful to the Lottery’s Community Fund who are supporting ACT, and especially our Community buildings work, with a grant over five years.

As part of supporting project development, ACT runs the national Hallmark award scheme for halls in Cumbria. During Covid we successfully adapted to online assessment visits.

The four halls above achieved Hallmark One, with Thursby also achieving Hallmark two

Many thanks to our two experienced Hallmark volunteer assessors: Peg Eastwood and Helen Squires. All our assessors have been involved in community building committees and anyone with similar experience who is interested in joining our volunteer team, please do get in touch.

### **Page 11 Working with Others 1**

Working with others is key to all communities achieve and ACT facilitates discussions on issues important to rural communities

‘The consortium bid [led by ACT] secured our support for arts engagement in West Cumbria due to its vision and community led approach’

‘ACT is a unique partner for ZCCP having expertise and vast experience of both policy matters and community engagement’

‘ACT is a key strategic partner, influencing policy and decision making, and ways of working with other stakeholders’

### **Page 12 Working with Others 2**

We advised and supported Electricity Northwest to develop a future resilience fund for communities effected by Storm Arwen. the storm left many households and communities without power for long periods last winter. Many communities showed their resilience and we are pleased to be able to support them with capital funds through the Cumbria Community Foundation and wrap around support to build their neighbourly responses.

We brought together community groups and the Lake District National Park Partnership to consider sustainable transport solutions. An action plan is place and being delivered by a wide range of partners, with our support.

We are also assisting Active Cumbria with rural knowledge and providing some leadership through chairing the Advisory board, where we are learning from their approach as well as sharing our expertise.

We help to promote community successes to others in our refreshed eNewsletter which is produced approximately every six weeks. You can also see current and regularly updated news on our website.

### **Page 13 ACT Staff**

Our small, dedicated staff team are predominantly working from home having change our work practices through the pandemic. Damien Morris was with us for most of last year covering West Cumbria. We wish him well in his new position with CYA.

We all multi task, covering a geographic area as well as having specific areas of expertise. Fran leads on Housing, Hellen on Community buildings, Julia on development and organisational funding, Katie on communications, Lorraine on strategy, transport and resilience and Dani, with responsibility for finance and office systems as the central point helping us all function effectively.

### **Page 14 Looking ahead**

Looking ahead, ACT will continue to support communities as we recover from the pandemic and deal with the cost of living and climate crisis

Using our new Rural Wellbeing Statement we will continue to support communities with resilience, neighbourliness and sustainable project developments in new and existing areas

Working with partners we will help Cumbria to address the opportunities and challenges of zero carbon for rural areas, including working towards an ambitious vision for travel and transport in the County, changes to fuel sources for all and support to community buildings to function sustainably.

We will continue to pursue local affordable housing solutions for rural Cumbrians, including addressing the housing mix in many of our communities.

the priorities we work with have not changed in many years, but the ways to address them are changing and ACT will continue championing community and rural issues across Cumbria”

### **Page 15 Finance Report 1**

Our Treasurer Alan McViety has provided a steady hand for our finances for many years. He summarised this year as challenging for many, ourselves included, and we have made a loss. A significant loss was predicted, but this was reduced through the year with tight management. Our reserves are still strong and with some new opportunities we know the coming year will be somewhat better. He carried on to say:

We continue to hold to our principles of not taking on work that others in the county are better placed to do, or taking from funders who are more focussed on funding front line work.

As the pandemic continues, the need for our support services has continued to increase. We are in a stable financial position to carry on meeting those needs, with the support of our many funders and partners.

### **Page 16 Finance Report 2**

Our income was £195,834 and our expenditure £248,396. There was less miscellaneous income and very limited funding for our housing work, so we made loss of £52,300.

ACT remains in a stable financial position despite these challenging times.

### **Page 17 Funders 1**

We are grateful to our many funders...

### **Page 18 Funders 2**

Whether they provide large or small amounts, they all add to our stability and capacity to support communities.

### **Page 19 Support ACT**

As always, please join us as a supporter. Its free and we promise we wont bombard you with emails!

If you are already a supporter - thank you.

We have 1,100 supporters at present.

### **End Page**

Thank you for watching our annual review!

If you enjoyed it please tell others

if you didn't, please tell us!

We look forward to working with you.