



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

Annual Review 2011/12



ACTion with communities in cumbria champions community and rural issues



ACTion with communities in cumbria our mission

ACT champions community and rural issues

ACT's work focuses on helping people and communities achieve their aspirations. We are particularly active in rural areas among communities affected by disadvantage whether this be economic, social or physical. We provide practical advice and support and deliver training. Through a variety of partnerships we are also able to represent the interests of communities locally, regionally and nationally, bridging between local people and the agencies and authorities that impact on their daily lives. ACT helps to raise awareness of local needs and to improve the relevance and responsiveness of services.

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Registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria

Charity Number 1080875

Company No 3957858

Photo's on the Front Cover are from left to right: CLP group in Sawrey, Orton & Tebay leaflet launch, ACT AGM 2011, Skelton Community Led Planning event.

visit our website at: **www.cumbriaaction.org.uk**

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Chair's Introduction

The last year has been a difficult one for ACT and, looking ahead, we and the entire sector face many hurdles. Nationally, the economic recession has deepened and further cuts in public funding, stretching to 2020, are envisaged. There can be no doubt that that this will result in real hardship for Cumbria's communities as services are reduced and reshaped to meet the changed circumstances. Within ACT there have been important changes too. Leonard Coulthard - under whose chairmanship ACT had followed a successful course for many years - had to step aside for personal reasons. In addition departures from the management team put particular pressure on the remaining staff, many of whom undertook extra duties during this period. I would particularly like to thank Alison Gerke for her terrific contribution as Acting Chief Executive during this period.

The organisation has now turned an important corner. We have put a great deal of time and effort into developing a Strategic Plan that sets out a clearly-focussed vision to guide us through the next five years. Importantly it identifies the business opportunities that we need to grasp if we are to be resilient and successful in the coming years.

Our new Chief Executive, Lorraine Smyth, has played a key role in crafting the vision and is providing a confident lead to the staff in making it a reality. A key component is an improved ACT 'offer' to supporters, members, funders and customers. Only by capturing your input and energies can we redouble our efforts to support Cumbria's communities and champion rural issues in these challenging times. More details can be found in the pages of this review. I hope you will find the information convincing and compelling and that it inspires you to lend your support to ACT in the coming year. Visit our website to find out more - www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to one of our Vice Presidents, Jane Johnston, who passed away recently. For many years Jane was an energetic presence on the rural parish scene in Cumbria and an eloquent contributor to our debates. She will be missed by her many friends.



Des O'Halloran
Chairperson



A resident of Skirwith discusses energy efficiency with Hellen Aitken

Rural Fuel Poverty

Eden District in Cumbria has the highest percentage of fuel poor households in the country. Fuel poverty exists when a household needs to spend 10% or more of their income on domestic fuel bills. Figures released by the Department of Energy and Climate Change in 2012 show the North West as having the third highest proportion of fuel poor households in England, and with the Eden District at 29%.

The three main causes are: high fuel costs, low household incomes, and energy inefficient homes. Rural households are twice as likely to experience fuel poverty than those in urban areas, partly due to the higher proportion of homes not on the mains gas network, relying on more expensive forms of fuel such as oil or LPG, and 'harder to treat' homes such as solid stone walled properties.

ACT works with National Energy Action to deliver the FREE (Future of Rural Energy in England) rural energy advice programme, sponsored by Calor. This year, this has included completion of a Village Energy Audit for Skirwith and Kirkland, which together with audits completed in other regions, can be used to put the case to Government for a more tailored service provision for rural areas. The Village Energy Audit Reports provide real data on what a typical off-mains gas village looks like, giving an overview of energy needs, aspirations for the future, and recommendations for improving the situation.

ACT will continue to champion Fuel Poverty issues with a Rural Forum event in the winter of 2012

Cumbria Rural Forum

Cumbria Rural Forum is a network of people and organisation interested in and working on rural issues in Cumbria. The Cumbria Rural Forum is a 'voice' for rural issues in the County. The Forum is a standing committee of ACT, advised by an independent Business Group, and funded by Cumbria County Council.

The Business Group, consisting of representatives from community, statutory and business bodies supports ACT to organise events and briefings on topical rural issues.

In 20011/12 we held two major events.

December 2011 - **Young People in Rural Isolation.**

This event explored the impact of rurality on the opportunities and aspirations of young people in Cumbria. It coincided with the visit to Cumbria of a team from the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) and contributed to national research by CRC into the barriers faced by young and elderly rural residents.

The meeting used a workshop session to identify the practical actions that would promote greater opportunity and aspiration



Participants at the Young People in Rural Isolation Cumbria Rural Forum event

for young people. The context is that almost one third of Cumbria's young people (age 0-19) live in rural communities, as do a similar proportion of children who live in income deprived households. A challenge is that the dispersed nature of rural communities means that the difficulties faced by all young rural residents, but especially those affected by low incomes, may be largely unseen.

March 2012 - **Localism – From Theory to Practice.**

This meeting was planned and delivered in partnership with Cumbria Association of Local Councils because of the critical place in Localism legislation of Town and Parish Councils. We explored the important new rights conferred upon local communities by the Localism Act 2011. We drew upon practical examples of local action and involved all delegates in identifying barriers to implementation.

Speakers representing public bodies encouraged communities to enter into early dialogue with local authorities and agencies, whilst speakers from communities identified how time consuming, but essential, dialogue with partners and local authorities can be. Thus, implementing localism needs to actively involve local residents and draw on any existing information such as Community Led Plans and the Local Plan Development framework.

In the coming year, Cumbria Rural Forum will continue to organise meetings to explore rural issues ensuring a combination of good information and a balanced participation of appropriate experts, practitioners and representatives from rural communities.

visit our website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT supports communities to Plan for Their Future

ACT has been helping communities plan for their futures for many years, with a focus over the last decade on Community Led Planning (also known as Parish Planning). These are plans by the community for the community, initiated by Parish or Town Councils, involving the wider community and covering anything that a community thinks is important.

Over the last year our role in supporting communities undertaking Community Led Planning has continued across the county in 41 parishes but with particular emphasis in Eden, South Lakeland and North Allerdale where funding has allowed us to provide additional support. A series of workshops for councillors in South Lakeland has enabled us to promote Community Led Planning so that elected members are aware of the opportunities and challenges communities face through an inclusive and coordinated project. As part of this work a video case study was produced which is now available on our website and provides a useful introduction to the subject.

Community Led Planning is providing a firm foundation for other forms of community planning with three of the Cumbrian communities who are piloting Neighbourhood Planning (which covers land use and spatial planning) having produced Community Led Plans first.



Volunteers at Skelton's Community Consultation. Photo courtesy of Bob Towers

A new ACT guidance sheet was produced to set out the differences and links between Neighbourhood Planning and Community Led Planning. The guidance sheet is available on our website.

We are now developing other ways to support communities to plan for their futures; a two-year Big Lottery funded project which ended in August 2012 saw the development of community emergency planning for Cumbrian communities following the November 2009 floods. The project has seen us work with communities and partners to pilot emergency planning, work with emergency planners and emergency services to promote and embed community emergency planning and the production of a toolkit to support communities who want to carry out this work in the future.

During 2011/12 we continued to develop Community led planning approaches. Our role as neutral facilitators is to bring stakeholders for an area; community representatives, land owners, government agencies and other public bodies together to agree ways forward. There are often strong and divergent views about local issues. Facilitated discussion is a means of airing issues and agreeing ways forward.



Detailed review of local land issues in Heversham

ACT supports communities to Develop their Projects

Tebay and Orton Local Distinctiveness Development project.



Annie and the Roman Centurion at the Low Borrowbridge Community dig

The key aims of this project are to work with the communities of Tebay and Orton to provide training, facilitate events and raise awareness of, and pride in, cultural and environmental heritage. This work is part funded by European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas.

In order to reach these aims, ACT has been supporting the development of three local interest groups: Lunesdale Archaeology Society (LAS), a Local Tourism Business group and the Friends of Tebay Church group. Annie Hamilton-Gibney – the project worker and a professional archaeologist has developed and supported all three groups.

LAS have now excavated for two seasons at Low Borrowbridge Roman Fort. Each dig has culminated with a well attended public open day to display Roman artefacts and work by local school children.

The tourism group brought together a network of local businesses who worked with Eden Tourism to produce the 'Visit Orton and Tebay' tourism leaflet; this led to a visit by Tourist Information staff from across Cumbria.

The friends of the church group are now in the process of re-vamping the church building which was in danger of closing, developing the vestry as 'the Hub', where they plan to start a community exchange.

This project has provided training, facilitated events and laid down a firm foundation from which the community can use the information gathered to involve the school, boost local pride and strengthen the economic base through cultural tourism.

ACT's Basis Project Support

As part of ACT's commitment to supporting communities to develop their projects we have provided training and networking opportunities for village hall committee members. In the spring over 80 delegates, representing 52 organisations, attended our 'Going for Funding – Ready or Not?' event. The day was organised to provide information on all aspects of planning for the refurbishment of a building, from establishing the requirements of the community to accessing funding. Two video case studies were produced to demonstrate how Skelsmergh Village Hall and High Wray Memorial Hall have approached upgrading their facilities. To help groups understand funding criteria and to enable them to produce high quality applications the Big Lottery presented information on the Awards for All and the Reaching Communities fund.

As a result of this event we have produced an additional video case study to summarise the Big Lottery requirements. We have also held a training day to enable committee members to understand their roles and responsibilities as trustees. Delegates have been encouraged to understand their governing documents. To ensure communities can access funding to provide a sustainable future, a number of groups are now being supported to update their governing documents.

In other work, three Cumbrian halls have now achieved Hallmark 1 the national ACRE quality standard which recognises high standards of management and again assist them to prove their effectiveness and therefore sustainability.



Longtown Community Building Trustees achieves the Hallmark Award.
Photo courtesy of annandale observer

visit our website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT supports communities to Work with Others

Whole Valley Planning

This is a term applied to the meeting of strategic and community led planning within valleys and water catchment areas. There is a strong sense of place within Lake District valleys which is enriched by generation to generation knowledge, especially in the hill farming community. These valley catchments also hold a range of irreplaceable biodiversity assets which are protected by legislation.

Some of the thirteen catchments which make up the Lake District have challenges with water management and flood mitigation; others have extraordinary visitor management dilemmas, all of them share quandaries of upland rural areas. The Lake District National Park Partnership and local National Park Rangers are leaders with ACT in the development and delivery of the Whole Valley Planning approach.



Visitor Management in Wasdale

The unique selling point for ACT in this work is its neutrality; its core commitment to fostering collaboration; its solidarity with and knowledge of communities, including the farming community; and its facilitation skills.

Recent unusual weather has confirmed the fragility of the remote valleys of the Lake District, and also the difficulty in linking the needs of these communities with the priorities driving the different national agencies. Borrowdale was a notable example of this in 2009 and 2010, and ACT was invited to facilitate and coordinate a community/multi-agency approach to flood mitigation planning.

The Borrowdale whole valley planning group has produced A River Derwent Management Plan which identified hotspots requiring flood mitigation action that took place in June - September 2012.

A new project developing the Whole Valley Planning approach in Wasdale is addressing visitor management problems. These include the challenge of major national events like the 3 Peaks Challenge, with increased visitor numbers and provision of all the necessary services. The community and partners are developing a Visitor Management Plan aiming to meet strategic and local needs in the area.

This work will continue in 2012/13 with a project in Ullswater assisting communities and partners to work effectively together.

Aspatia Village Hall Cluster

In 2010 the Aspatia Rural Partnership was established. The Partnership consists of nine parishes all of whom made a commitment to produce a joint community led plan. In November of 2011 the Aspatia Rural Partnership Community Action Plan was launched. ACT has worked with groups in Aspatia, alongside other partners for several years.

Within the action plan there was an objective, under the aim of Promoting Safer and Stronger communities, of coordinating and promoting events in village halls and other community facilities.

The ACT BASIS Big Lottery project is specifically about supporting communities and organisations to be sustainable. Having BASIS work with this initiative alongside the local ACT development officer supported the achievement of this objective.

Six of the nine village halls in the Partnership agreed to take part in a series of workshops looking at who uses their halls, type of user group/activities, what activities are taking place to raise fund, sharing of equipment, advertising and promoting events, sharing calendars of events and promoting each others events.

This first workshop generated a very positive response to the sharing of both good and not so good practice and a commitment from each to help support the other halls in a cluster group. The issue of sharing information resulted in setting up a community drop box allowing each hall to post information about activities within their own halls and to share information from others. Subsequent workshops looked at examples of good practice from elsewhere and explored ways of cost savings by pooling resources, with the group agreeing to continue to meet on a regular basis to continue to support each other.



Going for Funding workshop participants

ACT supports communities to Influence and Change Policy

Big Society Conference

Between March and June 2011 ACT worked on the lessons learnt from the Big Society project which aimed to understand some of the challenges that three groups of communities involved in the Government's Big Society Vanguard faced. The project recorded the experiences of volunteers working on projects in the Lyvennet Valley, Heart of Eden area around Appleby and Upper Eden area around Kirkby Stephen.

The communities were included as a rural pilot in the Big Society Vanguard programme announced by the Prime Minister in July 2010. Local people worked closely with their MP Rory Stewart and with colleagues from a range of government departments and agencies to take forward key projects that had been previously identified in their Community Led Plans. What took place was of national interest and ACT, with the support of the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and Eden District Council produced a set of case studies and guidance sheets and a report of findings which are available on the ACT website.

The project culminated in a conference; Big Society: Rural Action on 18 June 2011. Over 100 people gathered at the Rheged Centre to hear about the experiences and achievements of the communities involved. There were also speakers from national Government, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), and Eden District Council, all of whom spoke about the changes brought forward by the Big Society agenda.



Top table and participants at the conference

Community Information

Another key piece of work over this year has been to re-develop our Community Led Planning database to ensure it can be used more effectively to provide local authorities and other partner organisations with up to date and accurate information about Cumbria's community led plans (CLP's).

ACT staff use the database to track the progress of community led plan groups and to record all the actions contained in completed community led plans. We use this information to produce reports for local authorities which they can use to influence their priorities so that they reflect the interests of Cumbria's communities.

Some of this information, including many CLP's, can be accessed on our website.



Some of the 90 CLP's in Cumbria

visit our website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

Hosted Projects



Our Green Space Project resources

Alongside its mainstream activities, ACT provides an independent, countywide presence which supports other third sector organisations and partnerships through a variety of hosting mechanisms. Over the last twelve months these have included:

- **Our Green Space project** was run in conjunction with Friends of The Lake District, supporting five communities across the County to deliver a series of workshops, events and village green conservation works and improvements. The project produced a Green Space Education Pack, Essential Green Infrastructure Report, an Our Green Space Celebration Booklet as well as a series of Open Green Spaces Management Guides. More information on the project can be found on the website: www.ourgreenspace.org.uk. The funding for this project finished in December 2011.
- **Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust (CWMET)** was hosted by ACT. CWMET administers the Landfill Tax Grant Scheme, which has an annual budget and supports public amenity projects such as village halls, play areas and community green spaces, as well as churches and historic buildings. More information can be found on www.CWMET.org.uk. The arrangement between the two organisations came to an end in April 2012.

Internal Activities

ACT is supported by a team of staff, some of who are instrumental in maintaining and improving internal systems and procedures. This includes:

- Support to the whole staff team and projects, as well as the CEO
- Budget monitoring, financial records, probity and claims processes
- Liaising with members and supporters to maintain the membership details and ensure the database and the information within it is correct & up to date
- Supporting the Board, its standing committees and ad hoc working groups including Health & Safety, Personnel, Finance, Cumbria Rural Forum and Marketing through the preparation of papers, minutes, attendance at meetings etc.
- Providing day to day maintenance and upkeep of the organisation's websites
- Reception duties and support, including housekeeping, for the Old Stables Building and Courtyard

- We let office space in the Old Stables Building to other third sector partners on easy in easy out terms. There are currently five organisations making use of this facility, the rents from which help us to manage our overhead costs
- We continued to improve our internal procedures and systems and maintained accreditation under the ISO 9001 quality scheme and retained our Gold Award through the Cumbria Business Environment Network (CBEN)



The staff team at ACT. Terry McCormick and Graham Reed were unable to be present for the photo

ACT Trustees



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 our President Jolyon Dodgson can be viewed on our website.

The ACT Board thanks all our funders, members and staff for their support in 2011/12

Left is a photo of the current trustees as follows:

(Left to right – Back row) Liz Clegg, Ron Munby, Ian Soane, Alan McVie,

(Left to right front row) Morag Lloyd, Des O'Halloran, Carl Bendelow.

Euan Cartwright was unable to be present when the photo was taken.

ACT's Funders in 2011/12

ACRE
Allerdale Borough Council
AON
Big Lottery
CALOR
Citizens Advice
Copeland Borough Council

Cumbria Association of Local Councils
Cumbria Community Foundation
Cumbria County Council
Cumbria Fells & Dales - RDPE
Cumbria Improvement & Efficiency Partnership

DEFRA
Department for Communities & Local Government
Eden District Council
Friends of the Lake District
Heart of Eden Development Trust
Lake District National Park Authority

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership (Via 3KQ)
National Farmers' Union
Natural England
North West Improvement & Efficiency Partnership
South Lakeland District Council

Looking ahead - Lorraine Smyth, Chief Executive Officer

ACT is launching a new commitment to Cumbria.

We will endeavour to fund regular support in each District and on key pieces of work such as community assets support. We will also increase our focus on campaigning for community and rural issues through our website and the Cumbria Rural Forum. More information about our services and campaigns will be made available on our website.

In 2012 - 2013 we will also be launching a new category of supporter membership for ACT; we look forward to seeing our car sticker (pictured right) across the county!

Some key issues we will work on over the next year are:

- Supporting local, everyday, community activity that many do not recognise as volunteering. This activity, such as the work of people at the Nicholforest Community Exchange (pictured here), sustains community life across Cumbria and may provide key learning for issues such as how to support our increasingly ageing population.



- Keeping abreast of significant opportunities in funding for rural initiatives, and maximising possibilities through the new Rural Growth Network in Cumbria.
- Supporting the focus of the Lake District World Heritage site re-application, moving towards a celebration of our upland farming culture, and the strength of valley communities. Developing a strong 'Sense of Place' that communities and agencies share.
- Informing, encouraging and campaigning on the achievements, challenges and needs of Cumbrian communities, through the Cumbria Rural Forum and partnership work with statutory, private and third sector organisations, both locally and nationally.

The times are challenging, ACT is ready to work with you to meet these challenges and celebrate achievements made along the way.

Come and join us as a supporter and use our car sticker with pride.



visit our website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

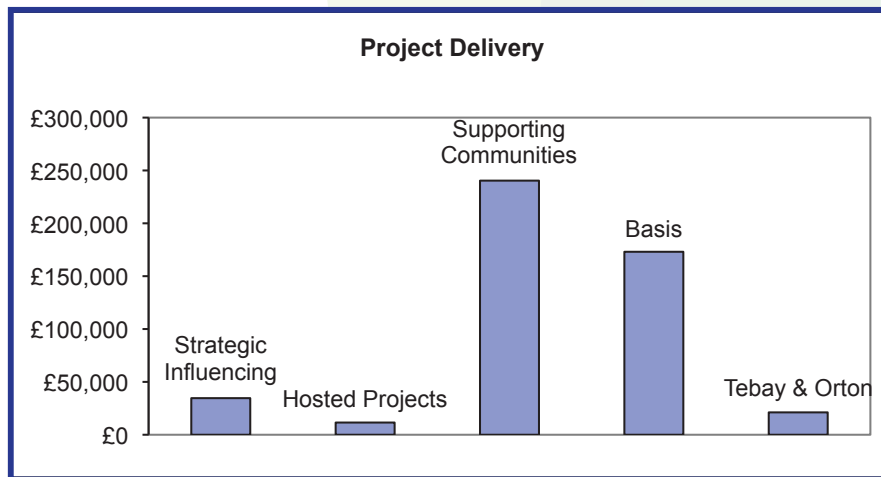
Finance Report

Against the backdrop of limited resources and uncertainties over funding, underpinned by the national economic recession, it has continued to be difficult to plan or develop services. Despite this the charity made a small surplus of £1,113 over the 2011/12 financial year. This figure was achieved by an active programme of new business development and careful internal cost controls. Trustees, managers and staff continue to work to establish robust plans for the future of the organisation and to provide it with a diverse income base that will support continued activity appropriate to the Charity's objects.

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	£35,449
Hosted Projects	£11,582
Supporting Communities	£240,467
Basis*	£172,450
Tebay & Orton	£21,724
	£481,672



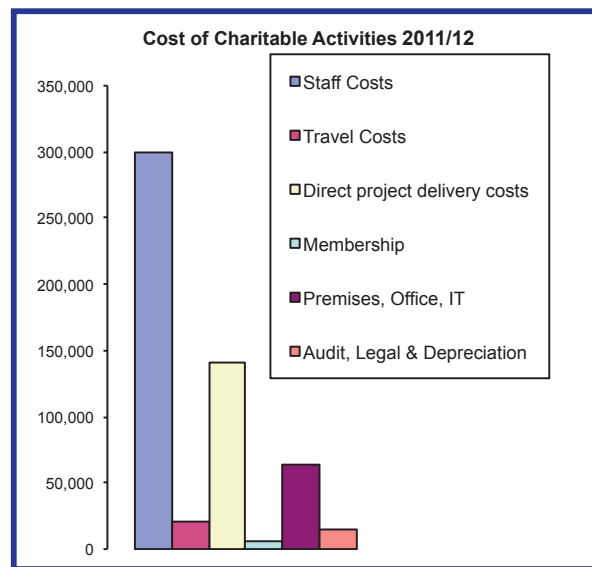
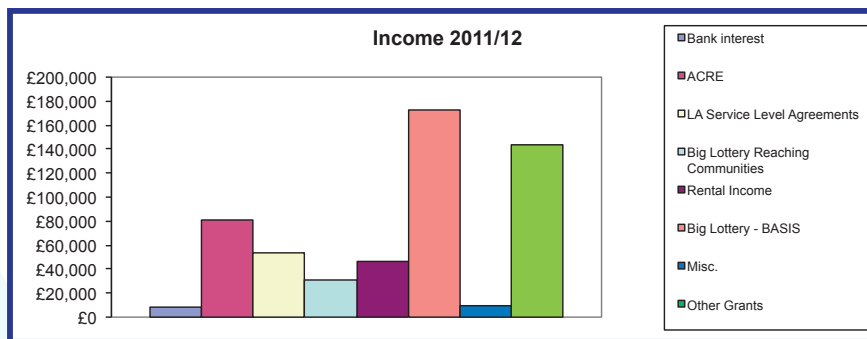
* Basis is a partnership project with Cumbria Youth Alliance and Young Cumbria, £88,036 of the grant goes to these partners. £84,414 is used to manage the project, improve ACT's sustainability and provide a variety of advice to community groups on governance and sustainability

Income

	2011/12	2010/11
Bank interest	£8,384	£8,729
ACRE	£81,023	£92,240
Service Level Agreements	£53,625	£61,250
Big Lottery Reaching Communities	£31,002	£15,250
Rental Income	£46,440	£53,619
Big Lottery - BASIS	£172,450	£150,791
Misc.	£9,583	£5,724
Other Grants	£143,572	£132,733
Exchanges	£0	£27,000
Big Society Projects	£0	£13,995
Improving Reach	£0	£65,000
	£546,079	£626,331

Costs Of Charitable Activities

	2011/12	2010/11
Staff Costs	£300,067	£331,673
Travel Costs	£20,381	£22,539
Direct project delivery costs	£140,681	£208,733
Membership	£5,229	£5,213
Premises, Office, IT	£63,383	£69,674
Audit, Legal & Depreciation	£15,225	£9,031
	£544,966	£646,863



visit our website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

If you have been inspired by this annual review then you can:

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

Join us: Help us to continue to support rural communities across Cumbria by becoming a Supporter or Member – individual, community group, public and private sector membership is available. Full details can be found on our website or by emailing info@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Become a Trustee: we are recruiting trustees with the enthusiasm and commitment to help us manage our work.

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ACT

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



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

Registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria

Charity Number 1080875 Company No 3957858

visit our website at: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk