

Annual Review 2015/16



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

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ACTion with communities in cumbria

champions community and rural issues



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

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 physical disadvantage.

We support communities by:

- Providing practical advice and support
- Delivering training, events and 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 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! See details on our website.

Cover photo: Parton's coastline by Fran Richardson

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Chair's Introduction

I recommend this report on our work of the last year to you and hope you find it an interesting read. We all look forward to another year of supporting communities to make a difference at the local level and to informing and influencing policy which affects communities and life for rural Cumbrian's.

Issues of note this year, in addition to those featured overleaf include:

- Our Annual General meeting last September celebrated the sustainability of five community projects in key areas of transport, village halls, arts, and social support. In what has been a challenging year for many Cumbrian's it was good to recognise the community spirit and determination that makes living in rural Cumbria possible. You can find out more about these projects on our website.

- ACT participated in the drawing up of a Rural Manifesto as part of a pan European initiative, when Hellen Aitken went to Austria as a member of the English delegation. The results of this will continue to inform UK policy even once we have left the E.U.

We have welcomed a new member of staff this year. Fran Richardson has joined us as the South Cumbria Development Officer. Julia Wilson is still with us filling a more internal role. I thank all the staff and my fellow trustees for their time and commitment this year.

Des O'Halloran - ACT Chairperson



ACT Champions Community and Rural Issues



Chris Cowcher, Village SOS programme manager, shares national news at the ACT AGM

LDNPP World Heritage Site Designation

Recognising the livelihoods and quality of life sustained by the landscape is key to sustainable Cumbrian lifestyles. So whether the Lake District achieves World Heritage status or not, the awareness raising of the value of the landscape to Cumbrian communities through the Lake District National Park Partnership has been valuable. ACT's work as a member of the partnership is brought into focus at every partnership meeting where we champion local community issues and activity.

Community Transport

The Cumbria Community Transport Forum adopted a new vision this year stating their ambition that: *All local communities have access to resources to assist them to meet their transport needs.*

The work of planning how to deliver that is underway, including a useful meeting with Rory Stewart, the Penrith and Borders MP. Rory told us that many enquiries from constituents relate to transport and that he wanted to support us to move the debate on. The Forum and ACT are planning an event involving all local MPs to help find positive solutions to Cumbria's transport challenges.

Supporting Communities to Influence and Change Policy

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Planning is an on-going theme for communities across the country. Many Cumbrian communities are exploring the idea and this year ACT, together with Eden District Council, produced a summary guide to the Neighbourhood Planning process. It explains what can be achieved and identifies the responsibilities at each stage for both the community and local planning authority. ACT used the guidance when working with a number of groups in Eden, including Lazonby where we supported their community consultation and the production of a local newsletter to share the results.

ACT manages a small grant fund on behalf of Eden District Council to support communities in the initial stages of investigating whether a Neighbourhood Plan is an appropriate route for them to address local issues.

We supported Alston Moor Parish Council to host a countywide Low Carbon Neighbourhood Planning event delivered by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. The event looked at Neighbourhood Planning as a opportunity to identify local climate change and sustainability problems and develop locally appropriate solutions.



Considering the options at a Neighbourhood Planning event in Lazonby

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

Supporting Communities to Plan for their Future



ACT's Fran Richardson provides advice at a funding event

Planning for the Future

ACT supports communities to take a local view on big issues like housing, traffic, and local employment. These views can be expressed in a Community Led Plan that informs community representatives as they work for changes and improvements with agencies, councils and influencers. The process can be a catalyst to involve people who don't usually get involved. We have supported 16 Community Led Planning groups this year.

In addition, over 20 community representatives attended a lively ACT event to consider the value of refreshing a community plan, or starting from scratch. Resources and guidance are available on the ACT website, plus officer support and Community Led Planning grants.

Community Oil Buying Groups

ACT's research into community oil buying groups included holding an event to discuss and share experiences of those already running groups, and to answer questions from those interested in setting one up. ACT's Community Oil Buying Groups Toolkit, produced as a result of this, includes guidance, template documents, and links to further information and advice.

Community Emergency Planning

We have been supporting communities with resilience planning for several years. This year we have responded to twenty inquiries about Community Emergency Planning (CEP), with seven communities going on to develop some type of plan.

To raise awareness of CEP, we have produced a new resource 'Having the Discussion'. Communities are often reluctant to embark on a full Community Emergency Plan process, so we encourage local debates to assist in raising communities understanding of how they can carry out resilience activities.

ACT presented at the Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch (CNHW) AGM about Community Resilience. CNHW manage the Cumbria Community Messaging Service that is used to log the 40+ CEP in Cumbria. CNHW may also be able to offer insurance for volunteers involved in CEP activity during an incident. We are exploring this further with them and the CEP groups post the 2015 Floods.

Dent residents produced a comprehensive plan this year. There is a Case Study of their activity on our website.



Community Emergency Planning information in Barton

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

Supporting Communities to Develop their Projects

Community Buildings Support



Group discussion at ACT Community Buildings Event

ACT's Community Buildings Advice Service includes three, free, countywide events a year, open to anyone involved in running a village hall or community building. 2015-16 saw successful events held in Wetheral, Shap, and Grizebeck, covering a wide range of topics and providing a valuable networking opportunity for the 79 people who attended.

In addition to topics such as: good governance; funding; trustees roles and responsibilities; incorporation; and providing internet access, Paula Fearnley from the Alzheimer's Society led an informative and thought provoking session about dementia friendly environments. Providing inclusive facilities for the whole community is fundamental for community buildings, many of which are serving increasingly older populations, and this topic prompted some interesting discussions.

This year ACT dealt with over 150 enquiries from 83 community buildings, ranging from simple information requests to complex issues requiring more in-depth support. We are pleased to have successfully secured funding to continue and expand our service for 2016-17.

Hallmark Quality Award

Hallmark is the nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for community buildings. It provides a benchmark for well managed community facilities, giving the hall volunteers, funders, and others, confidence that the hall is run well.

ACT oversees delivery of the scheme in Cumbria, backed up by a system of trained peer visitors providing external validation of achievement. We would like to thank our Hallmark volunteer visitors Helen Squires and Jackie Featherstone for their continued support and enthusiasm.

Village SOS - Support, Outreach, Sustainability

Village SOS is a national campaign funded by the Big Lottery enabling support to be delivered to community projects in rural areas across the country.

ACT has been supporting 21 groups to plan for and develop projects providing better services in their communities. Many are community buildings but we're also working with a community-run swimming pool, play area, heritage trail, educational charity, older persons forum, coastal initiative, and conservation trust.



Brough Memorial Hall receives Hallmark 1 award

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

Supporting Communities to Work with Others

North Copeland - making the most of their coast

ACT has supported an ambitious union of parishes in North Copeland to increase the chances of attracting major funding to the area. The coastal Parish Councils of Lowca, Parton, St Bees and Low Side Quarter, together with Whitehaven Town Council, have formed a Coastal Communities Team in order to drive forward delivery of a grass roots economic plan for the area.

Working together with Copeland Borough Council, the Coastal Communities Team is assembling an application to the BIG lottery Coastal Communities Fund for over £2 million. These funds would help connect the communities through improved walking and cycling routes, provide better facilities and play areas to attract day trippers, and create opportunities for apprenticeships around Whitehaven.

ACT facilitated community consultation events, to inform the content of an Economic Plan, and has helped the group to assess its organisational structure options for working together into the future.



North Copeland Coastal Communities' Economic Plan

Good Neighbours

ACT has been involved in a national project to develop Good Neighbours activities in rural communities. The models and approaches trialled with partners across the country have informed the approach in Cumbria and we will be piloting a Good Neighbours Network next year.

Kirkby Stephen Community and Council Centre has been working with a small team of volunteers, to set up a Good Neighbours scheme for the seventeen parishes they cover. Two community events recruited volunteers and spread the word that some free support could be available for people of all ages struggling with everyday activities in the home. ACT was able to assist with advice, a toolkit, free Vetting and Baring checks and a small starter grant, courtesy of the national scheme.



Promotion at Skelton Show of ACT's support services

ACT encourages local communities to start by looking at what already happens in a community, with local organisations like Age UK, the WI, and the local churches, before thinking of setting up a new scheme.

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

ACT Trustees



ACT is a membership organisation and a company limited by guarantee. ACT has a Management Board of no less than six 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 on the ACT website.

The ACT Board would like to thank all our funders, members, supporters and staff for their support in 2015/16.

ACT Trustees (L - R) Jolyon Dodgson (President), Des O'Halloran (Chairperson), Sue Castle-Clarke, Jim Webster, Ron Munby MBE, Lorraine Smyth (CEO), and Ian Payne.

Liz Clegg and Alan McViety were unable to attend.

ACT's Funders in 2015/16

- Age UK West Cumbria
- Allerdale Borough Council
- AON
- Bedfordshire RCC
- Copeland Borough Council
- Cumbria Action for Sustainability - Sustain Eden
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria Third Sector Consortium
- Defra
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- St. James's Place Foundation
- Wingspan Consulting Limited

ACT Staff

What communities say about us

"There is so much to think about when carrying out a major community project... Having ACT and its expert staff in the background gave us the confidence we needed"

"You are wonderful, thank you so much!"

"ACT provides information, links and vital support for small organisations in our communities"

"I value ACT because of the sound advice offered and the willingness to support and refer to other organisations"

ACT Resources

Key resources that we produced this year include:

- Village Hall Guide to Funders
- Community Oil Buying Groups Toolkit
- Community Emergency Planning - Having the Conversation
- Neighbourhood Planning - A Summary
- Regular ACT Gazette newsletter and Case Studies



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

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

Finance Report

We have managed our costs very effectively this year and achieved some new funding, which means we enter 16/17 in a more optimistic position than previously forecast. We will continue to scrutinise delivery costs, while also investing in staffing, to ensure the quality and reach of our delivery. We expect a balanced budget in the next financial year.

Charity Income

	15/16	14/15
ACRE	67,312	67,300
Local Authority SLA's	60,350	61,250
ACT Investment	49,000	43,670
Miscellaneous	21,697	29,342
Other Grants & Donations	7,636	8,260
Bank Interest	7,606	5,099
Big Lottery Sustain Eden (via CCVS)	5,598	15,200
Health and Wellbeing	0	3,232
Rental Income	0	20,389
Totals	219,199	253,688

Charity Costs

	15/16	14/15
Staff	131,532	124,548
Premises, Office, IT	28,114	37,419
Travel	8,523	7,251
Audit & Legal	7,212	12,010
Direct project delivery	6,135	16,885
Membership	4,850	5,020
Totals	186,366	203,133

Looking Ahead

Supporting community managed assets, such as village halls and community buildings, is an important part of our work. We have successfully secured funding to continue this in 2016-17 and would like to thank: Frieda Scott Trust; Hadfield Trust; and Allerdale, Eden, and South Lakeland District Councils.

A further achievement is 2-year funding from the Prince's Countryside Fund to develop business continuity planning with Village Halls. This fits with our on-going work encouraging communities to be more resilient to extreme weather, reduced funding, and an ageing and declining volunteer base.

We hope to be able to provide significant 'on the ground' support for communities wanting to undertake Community Emergency and Resilience Planning activity and to launch a new support

service for individuals and households encouraging them to review their own resilience.

Due to the sad demise of Cumbria Rural Housing Trust we will pick up some of the Rural Housing Enabling work, supporting communities with Housing needs surveys and developing a 'voice' to champion rural, affordable housing.

We will continue with our advocacy on rural transport needs and hopefully move to some practical solutions supporting communities to meet their needs, in partnership with the Cumbria Community Transport Forum.

With partners, nationally and locally we will also be advocating for continuing investment in rural areas post Brexit to ensure that everyone living in every town, village and hamlet will have the same opportunities and access as others in the Country.



Lorraine Smyth - ACT CEO



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

If you have been inspired by this annual review then 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.



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



Twitter

Follow us @ACTCumbria

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Printed on recycled paper by Badger Press Ltd.

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