

Annual Review 2016/17



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

ACT's Mission

ACTION with communities in cumbria

champions community and rural issues



ACTION with Communities in Cumbria, Offices O - Q
Skirsgill Business Park, Penrith CA11 0FA

Telephone: **01228 817224**

Email: info@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

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: Fairfield Horseshoe from Under Loughrigg
by Fran Richardson*

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Chair's Introduction

This is my last year as the Chairperson of ACT so I am reflecting that we have come a long way in my seven years in office.

- We are now a focused organisation with a strong staff team, delivering community development support across the county.
- Our finances are healthy and balanced for the first time in several years.
- Our board has been supplemented with new members bringing additional social entrepreneurial and business expertise.
- Our relationship with our national body - ACRE and the 37 Rural Community Charities is leading to learning and collaborations.
- Our relationship with DEFRA, through ACRE, is constructive and the funding agreement clear for a parliamentary term.
- Despite challenging times our relationship with the County Council, and the District Councils is positive.

And most importantly, communities are continuing to show their resilience, innovation and tenacity to make life better, and requesting ACT's support to help them to do so.
Here's to many more productive years.

Des O'Halloran - ACT Chairperson



ACT Champions Community and Rural Issues



Alistair Kirkbride speaks at the Transport Symposium

Rural Transport Solutions Group

Improving the challenge of rural transport is the task ACT has set itself, and the way we've approached this is by:

- Partnering a range of county and local organisations.
- Drawing in people with different ideas for solutions.
- Thinking in terms of movement and shared transport rather than public transport.
- Looking at what people have done elsewhere.
- Celebrating what is good about delivery in Cumbria - Rural Wheels; the eight Community Transport groups; and the political support to continue funding and seeking solutions.
- Not giving up even when the challenge has been in the 'too hard' box for many years.

After a year of work we are still in the ideas phase, but the ideas are exciting and we are all enthused to continue the journey!

So thank you to: Alistair, Debbie, Liz, Peter, Katy, Colin, Derick, Neil and Emma, who have stuck with it. Next year... delivering some results.

Supporting Communities to Influence and Change Policy

Community Led Housing

ACT has been developing an offer on Rural Housing, following the sad demise of Cumbria Rural Housing Trust, and we have a small working group supporting this.

On the Government's announcement of a new Community Led Housing fund we worked with Andy Lloyd, Cumbria's own Community Land Trust expert, to support Allerdale, Copeland, Eden, and South Lakeland district councils to draw down the £4.2 million of new money. The funding is for creating homes to be managed by communities, in perpetuity for local people.

Housing takes a long time to reach the building phase and with the requirement that these be community led initiatives throughout, pace will necessarily be slow. But this is such an important opportunity for communities who have always wanted small numbers of local, affordable housing.

It can be done, there are several very successful Community Land Trusts in Cumbria such as Keswick, Lyvennet, and Skelwith & Langdale and the aim is for many more and varied community managed projects to follow.



Skelwith & Langdale Community Land Trust building work

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

Supporting Communities to Plan for their Future

Rebuilding Together - Communities in Control

In October 2016 the partnership of ACT, Cumbria CVS, and Cumbria Action for Sustainability was awarded £1 million by the Big Lottery, to assist households, communities and third sector organisation to be more resilient to extreme weather incidents. ACT's 'Communities in Control' elements of the project include:

- Raising awareness of resilience issues with all households in Cumbria.
- Targeting previously flooded communities to support resilience and emergency planning.
- Events and publications to support self help longer term
- Working with agencies and local government to ensure their strategies and emergency planning processes include communities and third sector organisations.

ACT also chairs the Community Resilience Network (CRN) of agencies supporting communities with emergency planning. The CRN meets six times a year, reviews Community Emergency Plans and works to embed community involvement in county emergency planning, response and recovery plans.



Cumbria Resilience Network meeting

Community Led Planning

In May 2016 the residents of Broughton, in Duddon Parish, saw their Community Led Plan in print after several years of hard work. ACT has supported the steering group during their journey, but truly dedicated members of the community have achieved a superb result here. They have a clear, ambitious and well-informed Action Plan which will guide the efforts of the community in the coming years. It has already helped the community to effectively challenge on issues such as:

- Speed restrictions on local roads
- Delivery of superfast broadband
- Threat of closure to the Post Office.

ACT is working with a number of communities consulting with their residents for the first time, or revisiting an out of date Community / Parish Plan. We help groups to talk to everyone in their community, to draft a plan and to see their actions taking shape by working with others.

Broughton are an excellent example of a group who have really built on the process and are committed to delivering on the actions they have set out.



Annette Carmichael from Broughton speaking at ACT AGM

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

Supporting Communities to Develop their Projects

Community Buildings Support

ACT offers valuable, free support to village hall committees across the county by providing reliable information and holding training events for anyone involved in running a community building. This year we delivered events in Sedgwick, Embleton and Scaleby, providing an opportunity for the 57 attending hall representatives to share ideas, ask questions, and take much needed reassurance.

In 2016-17 we have been approached with over 155 village hall related queries covering topics from governance and the role of trustees, to licenced entertainment and managing play areas for young people.

Hallmark Quality Award

ACT continues to coordinate this nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for community buildings, with the support of trained peer assessors. It provides a benchmark for well managed community facilities, giving volunteers, hirers, funders and others confidence that the hall is run well. Congratulations go to Beck community centre and Longtown Memorial Hall on achieving Hallmark 1 this year.



Beck Community Centre receives Hallmark 1 award

Village SOS Projects

ACT is pleased to have support 20 Cumbrian community groups as part of the Village SOS - Support Outreach and Sustainability programme. This BIG Lottery funded project, managed by our national body, Action with communities in Rural England was all about helping communities to survive and thrive by becoming more enterprising.

Groups supported were: Allonby Village Hall, Askham & District Community Centre, Beaumont Parish Hall, Blindcrake Village Hall, Dalston Victory Hall, Fairhill Community Group, Friends of Askham Swimming Pool, Friends of the Ullswater Way, Harriston Village Hall, Hunsonby Community Centre, Joseph Hutchinson Educational Charity, Kirkby Thore Memorial Hall, Lazonby Village Hall, Matterdale Community Association, Melmerby Village Conservation Trust, North Copeland Coastal Communities Team, Shap Community Organisation, Skelton (Toppin) Memorial Hall, Stainton Village Hall, and West Cumbria Older Peoples Forum.



Opening celebration for the Roman seat, one of the heritage themed installations created by the Friends of the Ullswater Way.

(Photo: Tim Clarke)

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

Supporting Communities to Work with Others



Village Halls Managing Risks Workshop

Village Halls Managing Risks

With funding from the Princes Countryside Fund ACT is supporting halls to be more resilient and think through how they will deal with any emergency that might befall them.



The project is partly in response to challenges a number of halls and community buildings faced in Storm Desmond, but covers a wide range of issues.

Four workshops around the county began by asking village hall volunteers:

"What keeps you awake at night?"

This was followed by a review of the tools and guidance needed to effectively consider risks and manage these on a daily basis.

Fifteen trustees from seven halls across the county are assisting ACT to develop and test the tools and once the resource pack has been agreed, it will be made available to all halls across the County. This is expected to be in Autumn 2017.

Designing Good Questionnaires

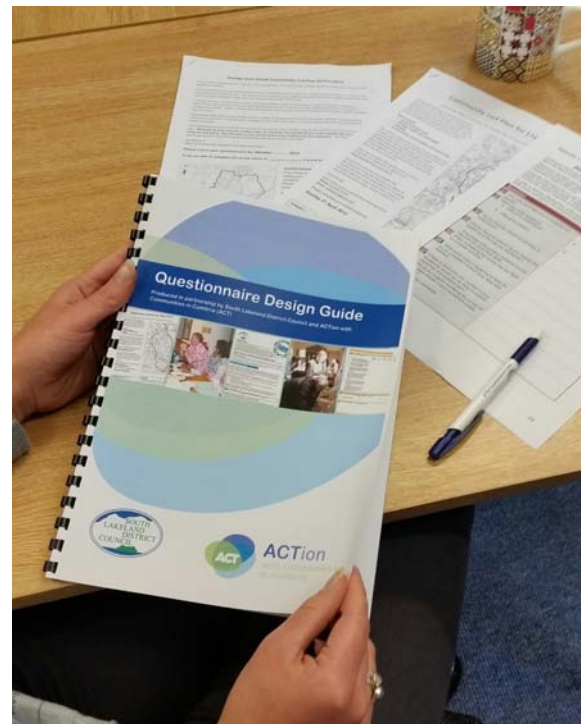
Effective community engagement and consultation is an important part of many community-based projects and activity. Using a variety of consultation techniques helps to ensure everyone can get involved, and this often includes surveying the community using a questionnaire.

In partnership with South Lakeland District Council, ACT delivered training to community groups on 'Designing Good Questionnaires'. Starting with the basics of information gathering, the training helped groups to consider how to ask the right questions, in the right way, to get the best information from their community.

The training included use of the Cumbria County Council 'Have Your Say' system, which is free to use by community groups, and can help groups to create an online questionnaire and also with analysis of results.

ACT's questionnaire design guide continues to be a useful resource for many groups, and is available to access on the ACT website.

Participants on the course praised the clarity of the guidance and the value of coming together to explore it.



ACT's questionnaire design guidance for communities

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 2016/17.

ACT Trustees (L –R) Joanna Tate, Jim Webster, Sue Castle-Clarke, Lorraine Smyth (CEO), Des O'Halloran (Chairperson) Liz Clegg, Ron Munby MBE, Alan McViety and Ian Payne. Sam Bramwell and Charles Ecroyd joined us later in the year.

ACT's Funders in 2016/17

- ACRE: Village SOS - Big Lottery
- ACRE: DEFRA
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria CVS - Big Lottery
- Eden District Council
- Frieda Scott Trust
- Hadfield Trust
- Neighbourhood Care Initiative West Cumbria
- The Prince's Countryside Fund
- South Lakeland District Council
- St James Place Trust

ACT Staff

What communities say about us

"You have great people with good knowledge of what makes Cumbria tick"

"ACT is at the end of a phone, keeps us up to date with legislation, provides training and helps with networking"

"I have very much appreciated the rural transport event and the range of parties it engaged"

"You are local and provide relevant information for our rural community"

ACT Resources

Key resources that we produced this year include:

- Case Studies: Cummersdale Village Hall Refurbishment; Dent Bad Weather Friends and Lazonby Village Hall Highlights Touring Theatre
- Assessing Community Needs Guidance Sheet
- Good Neighbours Scheme Toolkit
- Spring, Summer and Autumn issues of the ACT Gazette



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

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

Finance Report

We have a small surplus this year of £36,699. This is testament to our tight management of costs. The economic climate is still challenging and we are exploring a range of additional income options.

We expect another balanced budget for 2017/18.

Charity Income

	16/17	15/16
ACRE/DEFRA	68,254	67,312
Local Authority SLA's	34,950	57,048
ACT Investment	49,000	49,000
Miscellaneous	4,600	2,700
Other Grants & Donations	14,042	7,636
Bank Interest	4,716	7,606
Big Lottery Rebuilding Together (via CCVS)	49,725	5,598
Big Lottery ACRE Village SOS	11,300	
Totals	236,587	196,900

Charity Costs

	16/17	15/16
Staff	138,536	131,532
Premises, Office and IT	30,416	28,114
Travel	8,288	8,523
Audit & Legal	6,470	7,212
Direct project delivery	11,619	6,135
Memberships	4,559	4,850
Totals	199,888	186,366

Looking Ahead

Taking a long term view is part of ACT's role in relation to the support we offer to assist communities to be resilient and sustainable.

In the current climate of austerity there is little funding for long term initiatives, but the resilience and creativeness of our communities to achieve their aspirations, almost despite what anyone around them is doing, is really something to celebrate.

So in 2017-18 ACT will be encouraging communities to celebrate their achievements. Some opportunities for this are the new World Heritage Site status for the Lake District and the 'Brexit' debate. These discussions have a clear rural focus and ACT will use the new Cumbria Rural Panel to consider impact and encourage communities to share their achievements and wants.



We will recruit to a new West Coast officer post developing more projects in Copeland and Allerdale as a result. We will also continue the Rebuilding Together project, with our partners, and most importantly the many people in communities who make the place they live safer and more resilient. We will continue to focus on the challenging issues that rural communities face by:

- Promoting neighbourliness and investigating opportunities for a new partnership approach to addressing social isolation.
- Starting a new social enterprise to run a Movement and Access project - looking at getting to and from places differently
- Assisting communities with housing needs to take the first steps towards meeting them.

And finally, continue support to village halls who are a key part of ACT's unique offer.

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.



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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