

# Annual Review

2018-2019



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



**ACTion**  
with communities  
in cumbria

# ACT's Mission



## ACTion with communities in cumbria champions community and rural issues

### ACTion with communities in cumbria

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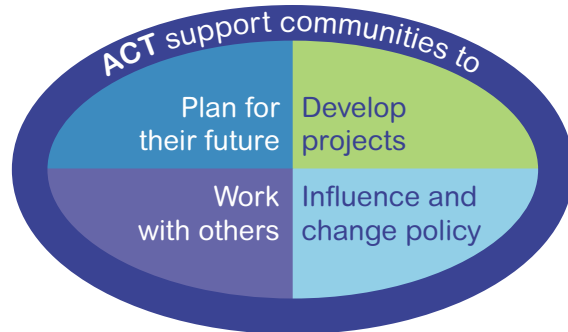
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Company No. 3957858

We help people and communities achieve their aspirations and make their areas better places to live. We are 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 workshops, events and case studies for community groups and social enterprises
- Linking together local people and the agencies and authorities that impact on their daily lives
- Representing the interests of communities, locally and nationally, and raising awareness of local needs.



If you want to support rural communities, keep up to date with our work or benefit from our services, please become an ACT Supporter. See details on back cover.



# Chairperson's introduction

This has been a successful year for ACT, our seventy first! We have new funding, new projects and new staff.

We have been successful with the National Lottery Community Fund in securing five years of support for our core work and enhanced support for our work with Village Halls, we have also secured a contract to deliver the Community Led Housing Hub for Cumbria and Lancaster and we have new funds from Cumbria County Council for neighbourliness work. All key resources to support ACT's mission across Cumbria.

We said goodbye to Rose Lord and welcomed two new staff: Gareth Douglas-Brown and Katie Milburn.

Unfortunately there was very sad news too, as our ex-colleague Geoff Brown passed away. He was involved with ACT for over twenty years, shaping our involvement with farming, our approach to enterprise development and running the LEADER programme for many years. In his honour, we are running an Innovation Award at our 2019 AGM.

I thank all the staff, my fellow trustees and the volunteers who are working alongside us for their time and commitment this year in ensuring ACT is a principled community development organisation supporting communities to be the best they can be. I hope you find this report an interesting reflection of our year.

**Joanna Tate** – ACT Chairperson

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# Championing community and rural issues

## Lake District communities and World Heritage Status

ACT was commissioned by the Lake District National Park (LDNP) Partnership, the Lake District Foundation (LDF) and the Royal Society for Arts to ask communities about their views on the World Heritage Status (WHS) of the Lake District.

We produced a report that highlighted some of the difficult issues that arose from our conversations with LDNP partnership members, with local people in five communities and from an online survey. You can find the full report on our website.

The top four priorities emerging from this work were:

- Reducing the impact of second homes in rural communities
- Improving transport links for people coming to, and moving around, the Lake District
- Investing in rural skills
- Protecting Lake District villages from over-development.

81% of respondents agreed that the WHS is an opportunity to develop international visits, while 76% felt that the Lake District is full and our infrastructure cannot cope with more visitors. 75% felt that hill farming is at the heart of the WHS and is a way of life that must be protected. You can find the full report on our website.

“You have helped us create the space for the community to take some control in this project, we couldn’t have achieved this without your guidance”







# Health and Well-being in Whitehaven

Well Whitehaven is a national NHS-funded project as part of the Well North initiative, aiming to improve the health and well-being of the Mirehouse community in Whitehaven. ACT worked with:

- the Well Whitehaven partner group to introduce Community Engagement standards and develop an approach that allowed the project to be community-led
- the project to develop and trial some community priority budgeting approaches.

To date, £200,000 has been allocated to projects voted for by the community. Significant in-kind contributions from Well Whitehaven partners have added to this investment.

Both community members and Well Whitehaven partners are committed to working on this different approach and aiming to build skills, experience and sustainable changes in ways of working together.

# Heversham conversations

ACT has supported Heversham and Hincaster in South Lakes to explore positive actions which can be taken by the community to support an ageing population and to nurture a more diverse population overall. There is concern that the absence of children and younger families may 'impoverish community life'.

The communities completed a Neighbourhood Plan in 2017, setting out how planning policy could best promote development in the area for 'sustainable communities within a valued landscape, strengthening the sense of community and wellbeing'.

Heversham and Hincaster Parish Council will continue 'community conversations' on these issues to see what local people feel may be some of the solutions.

Peter Clarke, from Heversham Parish Council says, *"We are creating a picture of the area in 2030 and asking if there are things we want to shape or challenge, to maintain a happy and healthy sustainable community. We are keen to challenge ourselves and to learn from other communities. With ACT's expertise and support, we will."*



# Influencing and changing policy

## Consulting your community

Whether it's a parish plan or a change to a building, consulting the community is useful both for gathering ideas and for ensuring there's evidence of a need for change.

An ACT workshop in Gosforth, West Cumbria in March 2019 saw representatives of three parish councils and seven community buildings come together to hear about the reasons for and benefits of consultation.

Volunteers were given a whistle-stop tour of online surveys, questionnaires and face-to-face methods for gaining people's views; and had the chance to apply some techniques in interactive exercises. As at all ACT events, the opportunity to share ideas and experiences from across the area was welcomed by all.

**For more information on consultation see our guides on the ACT website.**

## Pilot CAP Reform discussion in Cumbria

Our Trustee, Jim Webster, a farmer in South Cumbria, has been supporting us as a member of the Lake District National Park Common Agricultural Policy Reform Group. Jim attends the regular working group meetings, providing a practical and thoughtful contribution in this important area and feeding back into ACT's Trustee meetings.

"We are renovating our hall and have consulted at every stage. The whole event was very useful to us and presented in an informative way."





"Once again, many thanks for meeting with us last night - it is incredibly useful for us to have a knowledgeable and independent third party to give feedback and advice on where we are and, significantly, where we might be going."



# Planning for the future

## Managing Risks Toolkit

The Village Halls Managing Risks Toolkit is a new resource promoted by ACT this year. Produced in partnership with village hall volunteers, and funded by the Prince's Countryside Fund, the simple toolkit helps committees take an holistic view of the risk areas for their hall under the headings of: Buildings; Money; People; Law and Governance.

Starting with the question "What keeps you awake at night?" it helps groups to prioritise the issues that they face, find relevant information to help, and plan actions to address them.

"The toolkit helps us prioritise, plan our approach and clarify when we need to ask for support. ACT is always there for us at the end of a phone with excellent support – Thank you"



## Whitehaven Town Council Plan

ACT has been working with Whitehaven Town Council over the last year to identify community priorities and we have assisted councillors to form a plan to guide the council's work. The councillors have attended several workshops, talked with people in their wards and ran a number of community events while collecting views about issues where the Town Council can make a difference.

**ACT has assisted 16 communities to work on a community plan in the past year.**



# Supporting communities to develop projects

## Community-Led Housing

Copeland Borough Council first joined forces with ACT to support delivery of their Community Led Housing aspirations in 2017 and ACT has continued to support community groups across the borough to address local housing needs. ACT's work is about creating genuinely affordable homes and strong communities in ways that are difficult, often impossible, through mainstream housing mechanisms.

One example comes from the village of Ulpha in the Duddon Valley. The Joseph & Eleanor Gunson Almshouse Trust owns and manages ten cottages, originally built in 1914. With support from ACT and £73,500 financial assistance drawn from the Government's Community Housing Fund, the Trust has so far

successfully renovated one entire cottage to meet modern housing standards (including new kitchen, insulation and redecoration throughout) and modernised the bathroom in another property. They have further plans to improve living conditions for all of the residents.

## Community Buildings events

ACT continues to provide specialist advice and support to village halls and other community buildings, including free countywide Community Buildings events three times a year. Each half-day event combines presentations, workshops, guest speakers and a vital volunteer networking opportunity.

This year we were at Crosby-on-Eden Parish Hall (Carlisle) in June; Lowick Community Hall (South Lakeland) in October and Newbiggin

"We certainly value our partnership working and your role and impact in our neighbourhoods and communities"







Village Hall (Eden) in January, where we also celebrated the second national Village Halls Week. Topics ranged from: trustee roles and responsibilities, data protection regulations, insurance, and business planning; to neighbourliness, encouraging increased physical activity, and village halls as places of safety. We were also pleased to award Thursby Parish Hall with Cumbria's first Hallmark Two quality standard award, recognising the great work of the committee.

“ The pace and content were very good and the facilitators friendly, approachable and informative. Lots of inspirational content and great networking opportunities. ”

“ I can't believe we covered so much in such a short time; excellent knowledge by all the speakers! ”

ACT has answered over 200 enquiries from village halls and community buildings in the past year

## Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership business supports

Cumbria has a thriving social enterprise sector but new enterprises often need expert advice and help in the early days of planning and development. Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership (CSEP) address this in a practical way by awarding business supports, grant aided through joint working with Cumbria County Council.

ACT has delivered eight business supports for the partnership this year to a range of diverse groups. The supports are usually of 12 hours duration over an 8 – 12 month period and are to achieve: a business plan, incorporation, or to address a thorny problem that is stopping effective social enterprise activity.

“ Thank you, Fran for yours and ACT's services that helped the team get this far, you have been amazing for us. ”

“ We have a Business Plan! We have all sat down and discussed and planned this. It has been a proper collaboration. Thank you for all your invaluable help. ”



# Working with others

## LACE UP

In the past year, ACT has supported fourteen communities to develop projects that encourage people to be more active.

These have ranged from cycling for all and introductions to sailing and canoeing in South Lakeland, to rebounding (mini trampoline exercise) classes in village halls in Carlisle, from purchasing exercise bikes for a village hall in Copeland and ballroom dancing in Allerdale, to yoga, tai chi and belly dancing in Eden. Over 200 people have participated in new physical activity as a result of the Lace Up project and the groups involved have piloted new sustainable activities.

This national pilot project working with the Sports Council, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) our national body and Active Cumbria, has really helped rural communities consider health and well-being and has improved access for rural people to a range of physical activities.

**"I am more confident in doing general exercise and feel healthier. I feel fitter and more able to partake in family "stuff". It has given me confidence to try fell walking again"**

*Participant from a rebounding class*

## Neighbourliness Works

Working with 20 partners across the county, ACT has launched the Cumbria Neighbourliness Network as part of the Neighbourliness Works project.

The project is a reflection of our work over the last seventy years where we have seen that neighbourliness and kindness in communities achieves great things. The project builds on the resilience work we have been doing in the National Lottery Community Fund Rebuilding Together Programme with Cumbria CVS and Cumbria Action for Sustainability. Over 100 communities have assessed their resilience and 60,000 Household Emergency leaflets have been distributed in association with Parish and Town Councils and at local shows across Cumbria – all encouraging people to work together with their neighbours to build resilient communities.

The Neighbourliness Network is primarily a social media campaign, encouraging neighbourly and kind actions across Cumbria.

**Get involved @kindcumbria on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.**





# ACT people

## Our Trustees

ACT is a membership organisation and a company limited by guarantee. We have a Management Board of up to 12 people (and no fewer than eight) called our Trustees. They are elected annually at the ACT AGM in the autumn. You can find their details on our website.

Our current Trustees are: Joanna Tate (Chair), Sam Bramwell, Sue Castle-Clarke, Liz Clegg, Charles Ecroyd, Alan McViety (Treasurer), Ron Munby MBE, Jim Webster and Lorraine Smyth our CEO.

Jolyon Dodgson MBE, contributes his tremendous expertise and experience to his role as our President.

## Our staff

The ACT team has three Development Officers, each covering a different part of Cumbria and each has different specialist knowledge.

Those Development Officers during 2018/2019 were Hellen Aitken (north and east), Rose Lord (west) and Fran Richardson (south).

Rose left the organisation early in 2019 and the team was joined by Gareth Douglas-Brown - West Cumbria Officer and Katie Milburn - Projects Officer.

Our Office Manager, Dani Hall is the voice at the end of the phone, and we have Julia Wilson, as Development Manager.

*As this report went to press we heard the sad news that Gareth had passed away. September 2019.*

# Looking Ahead

## Sustainable communities, what are the ingredients?

We are very clear that locally managed, affordable housing and the means to travel to the services needed for everyday life are fundamental to sustainable rural communities. This is as true in Cumbria as it is in many other rural locations across the UK.

So, while every day at ACT is different and varied, we have a focus at our core and a longer term programme of work that we know will be consistent and we will be involved with over many years. Housing and transport are at the heart of this, along with the kindness and neighbourliness that bind communities together.

## Locally owned and managed housing

There are still Community Led Housing funds available in the county, and additional resources available from central government to fund not only development of new projects, but also the capital costs of both new and refurbished housing.

The Community Led Housing Hub we are developing for Cumbria and Lancaster is part of our longer term approach to supporting communities to be sustainable.

Lack of suitable homes for the young, new families and people downsizing are the issues we hear most about. Unusually, there is an opportunity to make a difference but we need to act now! We are doing everything we can to encourage anyone who has ever thought that locally owned and managed homes could be part of a solution for their community, to have a discussion with us. Together, we can explore the opportunities and plan for action.

Our 2019 AGM will be focussed on housing, sharing projects that communities are already developing and looking at longer term policies that should support community led solutions

## Local transport solutions

Transport is an issue we have worked on over many years. There are no simple solutions and, as many of you tell us, the commercial services in rural communities are disappearing every year.

We know of people who are paying £60-£100 for a taxi to visit relatives in hospital. However, there are other travel options. One success this year came through ACT working with the Experience of Care at a Distance Group, with the North Cumbria



Hospital Trust, Cumbria County Council and others, to promote information on bus and train times and travel connections from and to Carlisle and West Cumbria hospitals. Where services still exist, we need to make people aware of them and encourage use through clear communications and access to information.

Unless transport solutions are economically viable, they will not be sustainable. The Cumbria Mobility Network, facilitated by ACT, is looking at local solutions that meet real needs and have a longer-term future. A key approach is to think differently about our cars:

- when and who could we share journeys with?
- are there key journeys into and out of our communities that could be communal?

Such approaches not only save costs and carbon, but build community connections too.

None of this is easy, but if you think a discussion in your community would be helpful, please get in touch. There are some really good community schemes in the county (and elsewhere in the country) and we have access to resources that could help you to pilot a scheme, to tailor an idea or to try something new that meets your community's needs.

## Neighbourliness addresses loneliness

**Isolation is another growing challenge in Cumbria's rural communities and we know that neighbourliness is an important way of addressing loneliness. That's what many of you have told us at village shows across the county this year.**

Our #NeighbourlinessNetwork and #KindCumbria campaigns are reaching more than 20,000 people each month. We are planning a Kind Cumbria Day on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Our challenge to you and ourselves is this:

What can you do to be more kind and neighbourly, where you live, work or spend your leisure time?

Imagine the impact if just 10% of Cumbria's rural population of 250,000 made a neighbourly connection on that one day? I think we have exciting times ahead.

*Lorraine Smyth*

**Lorraine Smyth,**  
ACT Chief Executive



# Financial report and funders

With careful management of costs, we have produced another small surplus this year. We have also been able to increase our services across the county due to new funders.

The future looks steady, but with some reduced funding on the horizon and changing times, we continue to manage prudently and to prepare for anything.

Charity Income	18/19	17/18	16/17
ACRE/DEFRA	47,925	59,972	68,254
Local authority service level agreements (SLAs)	52,600	57,350	34,950
Big Lottery Rebuilding Together (through Cumbria CVS )	84,877	84,371	49,725
LACE UP Sports Council (through ACRE)	14,955	-	11,300
ACT investment	0	34,098	49,000
Other grants and donations	44,370	8,000	14,042
Bank interest	3,981	4,169	4,716
Miscellaneous	17,372	13,876	4,600
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>266,080</b>	<b>261,836</b>	<b>236,587</b>

Charity Costs	18/19	17/18	16/17
Staff costs	160,968	163,598	138,536
Direct project delivery	38,126	38,711	11,619
Travel	10,237	9,477	8,288
Premises, office and IT	34,232	32,272	30,416
Audit and legal	7,089	6,687	6,470
Memberships	4,260	4,260	4,559
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>254,912</b>	<b>255,005</b>	<b>199,888</b>

# Funders

## Thanks to our funders of this year :

- ACRE: DEFRA
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Carlisle City Council – For the Community Led Homes Partnership (including Lancaster City Council)
- Copeland Borough Council
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- ACRE – Sport Council (for the LACE UP programme)
- Copeland Community Fund
- Cumbria CVS – Big Lottery
- The Prince's Countryside Fund
- Lake District Foundation
- Royal Society of Arts
- Well Whitehaven
- Whitehaven Town Council



# Become a Supporter of ACTion with Communities in Cumbria

## Everyone benefits

- Help us show the scale and scope of community action in Cumbria - we're aiming to grow our network to 2000 Supporters
- In return, we will keep you informed and ask your opinion on community and rural issues
- If you support us, we can better support you!

It's easy to become a Supporter...



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