

March 2017

Lazonby is a large rural village located about 8 miles north-north east of Penrith. It is surrounded by the villages of Great Salkeld, Little Salkeld and Kirkoswald, with other smaller settlements, such as Croglin, Plumpton, Renwick and Staffield nearby.

Highlights Rural Touring Programme is promoted at Lazonby Village Hall by 'Lazonby & District's Got Talent', a small voluntary organisation which for the past nine years has organised an annual talent event for local people.

Background

Highlights is one of 40 similar schemes that support professional arts in hundreds of small community venues throughout the UK, playing an important part in the social life and sustainability of their community.

The aim of Lazonby's Got Talent is to provide opportunities for local people of all ages to develop and showcase their talents at an annual event in a local and accessible community environment.

Building on the popularity of the annual talent show, volunteers see Highlights as a great way to bring more live entertainment to Lazonby and the surrounding villages.

The Lazonby and District's Got Talent team have been successfully promoting the scheme in Lazonby Village Hall for two years. They aim to build their following and increase the reach of this international touring arts programme.

The Project

Lazonby Village Hall has a large main hall, a stage with lighting, and backstage storage areas.

It has ideal facilities for the types of entertainment which tours on the Highlights programme, and with the capacity to seat 200 people, many people from the local area can enjoy the shows.



Lazonby Village Hall - main hall and stage

Highlights works directly with a number of Village Halls across Cumbria. In Lazonby, the Lazonby's Got Talent group has taken on the role of promoting the events but often this is done by the village hall venue.

Each year the group (Lazonby and District's got Talent) selects acts from the touring list provided by Highlights, secures the use of the village hall venue for the tour dates agreed, and promotes the events to the wider community.

Popular performances have included the New Rope String Band who played a sell-out event when they visited Lazonby in 2015, as part of their farewell tour. Small and less well known acts offer a chance for remote rural communities to access more niche styles, but the professionalism of the artists is always apparent.



*Montreal Guitare Trio,
performing at Lazonby Village Hall in May 2017*

The group's volunteer promoter Jill Eastham says "I feel very strongly that this is one of the strengths of the Highlights scheme; it brings worldwide, top quality performers to rural communities.

"I have never been disappointed by a performance and I am delighted, and privileged, that we can have worldwide and often famous names visiting our local village communities."

The Learning

One of the obstacles the group faces is attracting a sufficient audience to meet the costs of hosting the performances. Although the Highlights scheme is subsidised, there is still a minimum cost to pay, plus the cost of hiring the village hall.

Experience has shown that it is more difficult to fill some types of event, and it can be hard to encourage people to try something new.

Some events have made a loss, but the profit made on other more popular events helps to balance this out. It is important to take this into consideration when selecting the acts to perform.

ACT champions community and rural issues

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*Scene from Les
Bordeliques
Blind Date
- Highlights
event at
Lazonby Village
Hall in March*



The group works hard to promote the offer locally, through parish newsletters and local community information hubs including, of course, listing the events on the Lazonby Village Hall website.

The local offer of such high quality acts can also have an appeal much further afield and efforts are made to capture this broader audience interest via countywide press opportunities. Some people are prepared to travel long distances to catch a visiting act, so active promotion is important.

Contact Details

For more information contact Jill Eastham of Lazonby's Got Talent on Tel: 01768 870824 or Email: info@lazonbygottalent.co.uk

To see the full Highlights North programme visit <http://www.highlightsnorth.co.uk/>.

Highlights currently has additional funding to support more communities, particularly in South Lakeland. For more information, contact Barbara Slack barbara@highlightsnorth.co.uk