



*The
Community Hall,
Grizebeck, South
Lakeland - featured in the
Cumbria Community
Buildings Directory*

Village Halls Re-open 17 May

ACRE has highlighted that while the Prime Minister's roadmap indicated that halls can re-open on 12 April, this is contradicted by later Government guidance which indicates halls can only open then for activities already permitted under lockdown, plus a small list of further activities. They are otherwise closed until 17 May. For further details visit the **ACRE news page** or **contact us** at ACT.

The Big Lunch is Back!

The UK's annual thanksgiving picnic for neighbours and communities - 'The Big Lunch' - is happening 5-6 June 2021 - so get the date in your diary! Check out **page 15** on how to get involved.

How Will Your Village Hall Maximise Bookings Post-Covid?

Make sure your village hall is included on the Cumbria Community Buildings Directory – a digital 'Yellow Pages' of village halls across the county. It's free to advertise and will help your hall bring in plenty of bookings when you are ready to re-open. Turn to **page 9** to find out more.

Inside this issue:

Communities

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Community Buildings

- Greysouthen 'Kindness is Contagious' Project
- Free Advertising for Your Hall
- Village Halls Domesday Book
- Improve Your Hall's Acoustics

ACT News: Project Updates & Events

- Community Led Housing Festival
- Spreading Community Cheer
- Improving Rural Transport Provision
- Cleator Moor and Millom Towns Funds

Other News

Events, Funding Opportunities, etc.

Save the date!

Community Buildings Event

What: A free event for anyone involved with a village hall or community building

When: **Sat 27 March, 10am - 12pm**

Where: **Via Zoom**

Online presentation and Q&A

Booking for events is essential

You can check out our website for event booking details:
cumbriaaction.org.uk/news-events

If you join us as an ACT Supporter we will email you details of all events:
cumbriaaction.org.uk/about/join-us

Community Led Housing events will be running through the spring and summer. Keep your eye on the Community Led Housing Hub website for details: **clhhub.org.uk/about-us/news-events**

Hi All

Who would have thought we would still be here when we went into the first lockdown last March? I hear so much from the many of you who are very active in your community, supporting people in need and sustaining local assets that will be so needed as we slowly emerge from the pandemic. But I also know there are many others who have not been able to continue during the pandemic as they would have wanted to. ACT is looking at how we can support you to sustain your community initiatives and rural communities, whatever that looks like in the coming year. Please contact us if you want our help to look at options: a community plan; work on reducing carbon for your group or wider community; thoughts on a summer celebration; or perhaps addressing housing, transport or neighbourliness initiatives. We can discuss how we can work together on policy and in practice to make 2021 the best it can be for all our communities.



Lorraine Smyth, CEO

On a practical note, we have had many enquiries about opening or changing bank accounts. People expressing frustration at the process and the timescales involved. There don't seem to be any short-cuts, I'm afraid. We have raised this with **Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)** - our national organisation - and hear similar concerns across the country as well. I hear that Unity Trust Bank is recommended by some of you. Often, it's the law and the cumbersome nature of it for small community groups that gets in the way, but sometimes it's a lack of knowledge from the staff taking enquiries at the organisations themselves. If you are stuck please get in touch and we will see if we can support you, but as I say, there are no short-cuts.

On a policy note, the opportunity to respond to an open government consultation on local government re-organisation in Cumbria is now available and I encourage you all to express your views on the four options available: consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/cumbria

We will soon see Cumbria re-opened to visitors again. I know many of you were frustrated at visitor's behaviours last summer: parking, litter, leaving gates open, illegal camping, etc. The Lake District National Park Authority, Cumbria Tourism and many other organisations are working together to manage the situation for the benefit of visitors and locals. We live in, or near, a National Park and



surrounding beautiful and special countryside. We must, can and do share it with the nation, but hopefully not all at once! If you are aware of hotspots that were particularly challenged last summer, let your Parish Council know so that they can work with the authorities to try and ensure some sensible management measures. Visitors provide much needed income into our local services and for our local businesses, and employment for our families and friends. We would not have sustainable communities without them. So, let's be as positive as we can and use all partners to manage the situations to best effect. You can see some of the management process here: lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/car-park-status

We have recently started to work with an artistic advisor to broaden the way we consult and work with groups. What will you do differently as we move towards more opening up after this challenging time?

As you can see we have re-modelled the Gazette; please do share your thoughts on our new look with us. I hope you enjoy this issue of the Gazette, packed as usual with the things you have been up to and opportunities to look at issues in your community in different ways.

Here's looking forward to a careful opening up over the spring and into the summer.

Lorraine



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

Remember if you support us - we can better support you! Sign up now!

Case Study | Gatesbiel Quaker Housing Association



The new entrance
at Gatesbiel Craft
Cottage

Affordable housing for older people in Windermere

Gatesbiel Quaker Housing Association Ltd offer sheltered and extra care housing for older people in need, in the Windermere area. The property, Gatesbiel House and grounds, was bequeathed to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) by Stanley and Emily Davies in the 1970's for this purpose. 19 self-contained one-bedroom flats were built in the grounds and Gatesbiel House (the Davies's home) was adapted to provide a common room, dining room, kitchen, office and Scheme Manager accommodation.

More recently, the Association decided to convert a remaining building - Craft Cottage, used by Stanley Davies in the 1930's as his Arts and Crafts furniture workshop and showroom - to create three additional housing units.

Background

Gatesbiel is run as a not-for-profit organisation registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 with a board of management comprising Quakers and non-Quakers. Similarly, tenancies are offered to Quakers and non-Quakers.

Gatesbiel is fortunate to have very skilled and dedicated trustees who share the ethos and principles of the original gift. Creating additional housing capacity meets the needs of more local beneficiaries and helps the organisation to cover its regular costs.

The Association oversee all buildings maintenance, and employ a Scheme Manager (and deputies) to provide a 24/7 on-call response, offer hot lunch meals and manage the beautiful grounds.

Following reductions in Supported People Funding from Cumbria County Council, the Board could see that extending their provision by the three units would provide an important additional income, without increasing running costs significantly, and so offer improved financial security for the foreseeable future.

The Project

Gatesbiel offers 'Extra Care' housing to help older people to live independently, with any additional personal and/or health care support provided by a range of agencies. Significant tenant support is available on-site seven days a week between 9am and 5pm and on-call at all other times.

Windermere has highly inflated rents because of the pressure on housing stock caused by the proliferation of second homes and holiday let properties. Furthermore, many larger properties are converted into bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation. Gatesbiel tenants pay a rent, which is typically 20% below the area's market rent.

Accessible
shower unit in the
new flat



The Craft Cottage conversion includes one first floor and two ground floor accommodation units which are designed to be fully accessible and can comfortably accommodate wheelchair users. This reflects another trend in the provision of housing for older people; as we are living longer than we were in the 1970's/80's, residents at Gatesbiel now comprise both 'active retired' and 'frail elderly' - those who most need the support of a trusted local community.

What has been achieved?

The project has successfully converted the Craft Cottage into three new accommodation units. This is a huge achievement and will help to secure a sustainable future for this fantastic enterprise. It has not been a straightforward journey however, and there have been times when a less skilled and resilient Board may have been discouraged or even derailed.

Since initial plans were drawn up four years ago, the Association have worked tirelessly to secure £320,000. Significant grants which were pivotal to the completion of the project came from Cumbria County Council (Extra Care Housing and Supported Living Fund), South Lakeland District Council (Community Led Housing Fund), from the local meeting of Quakers and other individual donors.

There were unexpected finds as the original building was reshaped which escalated the build costs to ensure the structure remained safe. Agreement of terms for funding took longer than expected and costs for the scheme increased as almost two years passed between offer and agreement. Added to this were delays caused by the contractor going out of business and the Covid-19 lockdown. The project ran over-time and over-budget, in spite of scrupulous management by the Association.

The Association have dipped into their financial reserves to cover the costs of the shortfall. Without these reserves they would have had to take out a loan to complete the project. The use of the reserves is not done lightly and only an organisation which has the stability to build and maintain sensible reserves, and the confidence that they can rebuild to their preferred level should do this.

The Learning

Contingency planning is vital. The over-budget costs here exceeded even the worst-case scenario for this project. Having a skilled and confident group of people leading and managing the project has been critical. The Board are fortunate to have a range of professional skills and personal experience which coincide to make a principled and effective management group who can make swift and good decisions.

Take advice from professionals to make sure you know what you are dealing with and consider raising initial funding for a feasibility study. Make sure that what you are planning to do falls clearly within the objects of your charity or company.

The funding agreements were complex and to avoid the Housing Association being held to disadvantageous terms they were able to take legal advice to challenge particular terms which they were least able to accommodate.



Kitchen unit
—
Craft Cottage



Want to know more?

For more information please visit:

www.gatesbiel.org.uk



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Read more of our Case Studies online

census 2021

Ready, Steady, Census!

Households throughout Cumbria will soon be asked to take part in the nationwide survey of housing and the population. It has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

Want to know more?

To be part of this exciting event, view one of the many temporary roles available at

www.censusjobs.co.uk

For more general information on the census please visit

www.census.gov.uk

Information from the digital-first census will help decide how services are planned and funded in your local area. This could mean things like doctors' surgeries, housing or new bus routes.

Census day is 21 March 2021.

In advance of Census day, every household will receive a letter containing an online code, allowing them to complete their questionnaire online. Paper questionnaires will be available on request.

The local Census Engagement Manager is Gary Brady and if you have any questions about the census you can contact him at gary.brady81@field.census.gov.uk

Community Safeguarding Leaflet

The current national restrictions mean that right now, vulnerable children and adults may be particularly isolated. This means that the family, community and professional networks they usually rely on may be unavailable or hard to access. However, safeguarding is everyone's business.

The Home Office, in collaboration with a number of other Government departments including the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), produced information and guidance for those who are operating in communities and may not be trained to recognise the signs of abuse or neglect earlier this year, and we would like to re-circulate this guidance. The guidance covers signs to spot and what to do if there is a concern.

The guidance can be found on the **Home Office Brandworkz portal**. The portal contains print and online versions of the guidance. We have also uploaded a poster focusing on child abuse, designed by The Children's Society, which we would encourage you to display in community buildings, village halls, etc. Please share these materials with your networks, and feel free to repurpose and adapt the text as needed (e.g. to add in to existing newsletters, guidance, etc).

Cover of the
new Community
Safeguarding
Leaflet



SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS



No child or adult should be made to feel unsafe. Everyone has a right to be safe from harm and abuse. All of us have a role to play in safeguarding, never more so than during COVID-19.

Local Connections Fund

New funding round coming in the summer



The Local Connections Fund is a £4 million fund to help charities and community groups in England that are working to reduce loneliness by helping them build connections across their communities.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the National Lottery Community Fund are investing £2 million each.

The money will be used to fund hundreds of 'microgrants' between £300 and £2,500 - so small, local organisations (with an annual income of £50,000 or less) can bring people and communities together.

Now is a good time to check out the information and start preparing your applications as Round 2 will be opening in the summer of 2021. You will only be awarded a grant once from this fund, but if you have been unsuccessful in Round 1 you can improve your application and try again in Round 2.

Want to know more?

To find out more about the Local Connections Fund, visit:

tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/local-connections-fund

For more specific information about the date Round 2 will open they currently say 'Please check our website nearer the time'.

Reform of the Right to Contest – a New Right to Regenerate?



On 16 January 2021 the Government launched a consultation on whether to reform existing public rights, known as the 'Right to Contest'. The stated aim is to create a more effective and widely used right to regenerate disused public land and property land in England. This offers a number of opportunities for active communities looking to regenerate their neighbourhoods and we would encourage you to take part in the consultation to ensure that your own interests and concerns are not overlooked.

This consultation specifically concerns 'unused or underused' land which is held by Local Authorities and certain other public bodies, not central Government. It recognises that the current Right to Contest has not been effective in regenerating disused sites. Since 2014, 192 relevant requests have been submitted using the Right to Contest, of which only one has resulted in a disposal order. The main reason for refusing requests is that the public body claims to have an intended use for the site.

By reforming the existing Right to Contest as a new Right to Regenerate the Government wants to provide the public with a quicker and easier way to identify, purchase and redevelop underused or empty land in their area. This may support greater regeneration of brownfield land, boost housing supply and empower people to improve their areas.

The consultation includes questions on the following areas:

- **What is included in the meaning of 'unused' or 'underused' land.**
- **A 'right of first refusal' to the applicant as a condition of disposal** (for example to give time for a community group to raise money for a bid).
- **Conditions on the disposal of land.**
- **A presumption in favour of disposal when considering applications, so it is clear that disposals will be ordered unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.**

The consultation closes on 13 March 2021.

For further details, visit gov.uk/government/consultations/right-to-regenerate-reform-of-the-right-to-contest



Greysouthen Village Hall, Allerdale



Greysouthen Village Hall - 'Kindness is Contagious' Covid Support Project

Greysouthen village and parish is a small community of 250 households and 650 residents between Cockermouth and Workington, in West Cumbria. The village has no shop or bus service.

During the first Covid-19 national lockdown in March 2020, the village hall committee identified that there were many residents with no access to normal services who were at risk from isolation. The village hall committee members launched an initiative that brought 90 local volunteers forward to offer their help and professional skills. This enabled the start of a community food hub that could supply and distribute food and essential supplies. The hub also offered a takeaway meal service to over 100 residents of the parish that had had to shield or self-isolate.

Through setting up the project, the group have:

- Sorted a regular supplier of food and essential products for local residents.
- Applied for grants to support the initial set up costs. Local residents also contributed over £600 to the project.
- Marketed the project via their website and Facebook page; posters around the village and on parish notice boards; through their 'Gossip' magazine delivered free to every home in our locality; by email, telephone, BBC radio and local newspaper; and by 5 different leaflet drops to the whole parish delivered by dedicated volunteers.
- Established four different food/essential packs at a value of £10 per pack.
- Used the skills of volunteers to record orders, sort, pack and deliver orders.
- Taken up the offer of a volunteer chef to produce a selection of take-away chilled meals adhering to all regulations in the preparation cooking, storage, and distribution of meals.
- Opened the village hall twice a week to allow residents to "drop in" and purchase individual essential items.
- Maintained Public Health England (PHE) and NHS guidelines at all stages through the project.



Chef Alec Anderson
preparing pre-ordered
take-away meals which
proved very popular
—
Food parcels





Food Hub at the Hall: Table of Success

Drop-in 'shop' & Food packs:

- 60 households
- 135 orders
- 50 home deliveries
- £890 of transactions

Take-Aways:

- 32 households
- 317 portions
- 65 orders

ACT



Jenny McCulloch, Chair of the hall committee, packing boxes of flour in the Food Hub

—
Receiving the Special Recognition Award from the High Sherrif of Cumbria



Positive feedback from the community

A local resident said "This was a lifeline for myself and my neighbour Sylvia as supermarket delivery slots were all spoken for. Four separate food parcels were offered, all doorstep delivered with no delivery charge. Payment was made by bank transfer, what could be easier?"

During the second and third national lockdowns the village hall again provided deliveries. The take-away service - cooked at the hall - was well used and a fish and chip van (making a small donation for electricity) was made available in the village hall car park. While numbers needing the service reduced, the committee were still able to take individual food orders which were delivered, and to maintain a small stock of essential items in the hall, open on request or for delivery.

The village hall chairperson Jenny McCulloch said "Throughout all lockdowns the response from the volunteers has been resolute, highlighting the strength of community spirit that exists in the village. We give thanks to our funders, Cumbria Community Foundation and Allerdale Borough Council.

And we were incredibly pleased to receive a Special Recognition Award from the High Sherrif of Cumbria for outstanding activity and contribution to the community in Cumbria during the Covid-19 crisis".

Want to know more?

For more information please contact Jenny McCulloch via the website:

www.greysouthen.online



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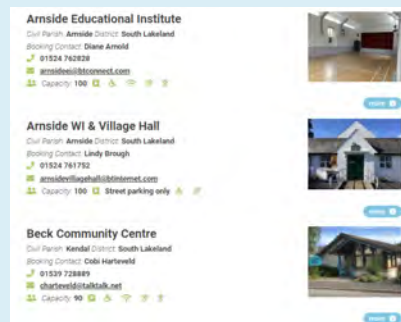


Visit us at cumbriaaction.org.uk

Free Advertising for When Your Hall Re-opens

Are you thinking ahead for how you can maximise bookings post-Covid?

Is your hall included on the Cumbria Community Buildings Directory? You can check here: cumbriaaction.org.uk/resources/community-buildings-directory



Anyone looking for a hall or multiple halls to hire for a one-off occasion or perhaps a weekly event can search, compare and make contact all in one place. Listings are completely free of charge and will help your hall bring in plenty of bookings when you are ready to re-open. All it takes to have your hall featured in the directory is a simple form and a handful of photos of your hall.

Want to know more?

Simply fill in the details here: cumbriaaction.org.uk or get in touch with Support Officer Katie: katiemilburn@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Village Halls Domesday Book

Many of England's 10,000+ village halls date back to the 1920s, when they were set up as part of a national drive to improve social and educational provision in rural areas. Today they support a wide range of community activities, events and services.

To celebrate the contribution they make to rural communities, ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) has created a virtual 'Domesday Book' for village halls to record the work they're doing in 2021.

ACRE Chairman, David Emerson CBE, said "It is a unique opportunity for village halls up and down the country to help us create a public record of the good things they have been doing, and the difference they make to local people as we celebrate a centenary of rural community action."

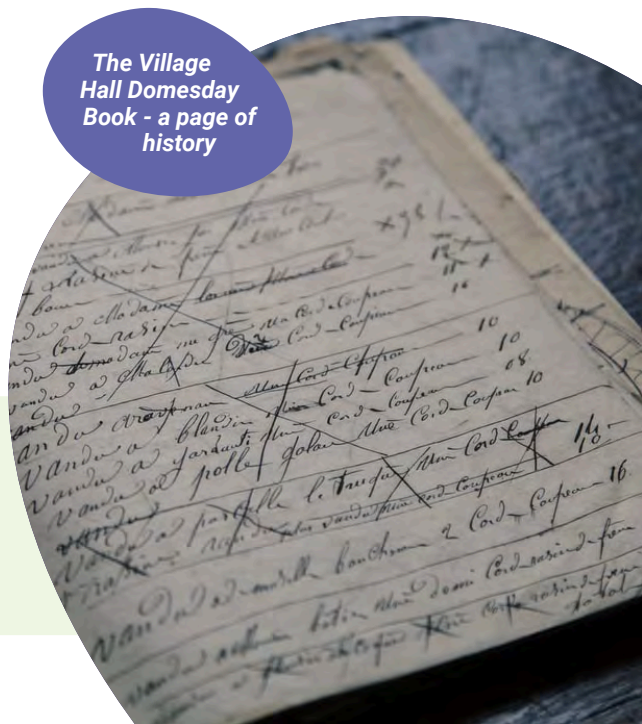
We very much hope the Domesday Book will serve as a reminder of how valuable these buildings are at a time when many have been forced to close their doors due to the national lockdown."

The Domesday Book is prefaced by a forward from Lord Gardner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs who is a long-time supporter of village halls.

ACRE intends to use the record to help make the case for sustained funding and support for village halls which will be especially important as the country recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

'Signing' the Domesday book takes just a few minutes. Enter your hall's name; the county; a short comment; 'thumbs up' for how you're feeling; hall photo and link to your website. Take a look at what others have written and add your hall at: coda.io/@acre/village-halls-doomsday-book-2021

The Village Hall Domesday Book - a page of history



Check Your Hall's Charity Details

When was the last time you checked your charity's details on the Charity Commission's online register?



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Whilst your Treasurer or Chairperson may be tasked with submitting your Annual Return, and ensuring details are up to date, everyone on the committee should know what's there – and you don't need a password to check the summary. Visit: gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission click on 'find a charity' and enter your charity name or number to search.

- **Are all your charity details correct and up-to-date?** If not, raise this with the rest of your committee and update as soon as possible.
- **Do you know when your village hall charity's financial year ends and that you must report to the Charity Commission within 10 months of this date?** A green tick on your charity's online record shows your reporting is up to date; a red cross shows the charity reporting is late and by how many days.
- **Are the correct 'Trustees' listed for your charity?** It can be confusing as most village hall charities have 2 sets of trustees – the 'Charity Trustees' (also known as 'Managing Trustees' or 'the Committee') and 'Holding Trustees' (also known as 'Custodian Trustees'). It's the charity trustees which the Commission needs to know about as these are the people who are responsible for managing the charity.

When reporting, the Commission requires full details for each charity trustee, including date of birth and contact information. However, only their names, date of appointment and any other charities they're trustee for are made public.

- **Is your charity contact information up to date, and does this include email?** An up to date email address will help ensure you don't miss any important contact from the Commission. Creating an email address for the charity, rather than using a personal one, makes it easier to pass on when a new person takes on the reporting responsibility and it can also be accessed more easily by others, if necessary.

Whilst you should keep your Charity Commission password safe (and change it whenever anyone who knows it leave the committee) it helps if more than one trustee can access your charity's online account, to ensure you don't get behind in reporting simply because of changes on the committee. In the event of a forgotten password visit: gov.uk/guidance/online-services-for-charities#get-a-new-password

- **Is the correct Charity Name shown (listed under 'Governance')?** The village hall charity for community X, known to everyone today as 'X Village Hall' may not have been registered as such. For example, it could originally have been named after the person who bequeathed the land or finance to build it. Using your unique charity registration number helps ensure your charity can always be identified, however, the Commission should also know of other official names or acronyms being used.
- **Do all the trustees have a copy of the 'Governing Document' listed, and use it to function?** Any amendments to this document must also be listed here.

The last 12 months have been particularly difficult, with halls closed and difficulty holding regular meetings and AGMs. The Commission has guidance about holding meetings online or by phone: gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector

Wherever possible, however, charities are still encouraged to report on time. Whilst your AGM may have been delayed, this does not have to mean delayed financial reporting - charity accounts are 'approved' by the trustees at a meeting prior to each AGM, at which they are then 'presented'. However if you still feel unable to report on time, charities with an imminent reporting date can request an extension by emailing: filingextension@charitycommission.gov.uk

Want to know more?

Help with preparing your Annual Return and details of what's required can be found here: gov.uk/guidance/prepare-a-charity-annual-return.

This article highlights some of the key areas where mistakes or misunderstanding can arise; if it's raised any questions for your hall charity, please don't hesitate to contact us at ACT for help (see back page for details).



*Acoustic panels
at Warcop Village
Hall*

Simple Ideas to Improve Your Hall Acoustics-tics-tics

Village halls, old and new, were rarely designed with acoustics top of the list, and certainly not for amplified music performance.

Halls vary considerably in size and acoustic characteristics but problems with sound bouncing around, even at lower volumes, can be a problem for many. Older, stone walled halls may find they have less of a problem as the sound is broken up by the rough surface.

The question of how to make a hall sound better can have complex and multiple answers, but on the following pages, we will offer you a few straight-forward, cost-effective measures you can try.

Walls

Walls generally have flat surfaces that sound likes to bounce off. The audience first hears the sound from the performance, then again after a short delay from the first wall, then from the second wall etc. You'll know if this is a problem if people find it hard to understand the lyrics in live music, dialogue at film nights, or just chatting with others at social events.

Hanging heavy curtains on parallel walls (not just over windows) will absorb a lot of sound and stop the 'ping-pong' noise. These don't even have to cover the whole wall, anything will help.

Or you can attach noise absorbing acoustic panels to the walls. These are available commercially or can be made with a wooden frame, sound insulation and fabric (tutorials are available online). Choose fabric the same colour as your walls, or statement pieces with blocks of colour, or perhaps commemorative fabric murals.

Mobile exhibition stands or privacy screens can be a useful alternative, anything which breaks up a large flat wall at the far end of your hall will make a big difference. Windows reflect sound just as badly, so closing your existing curtains will also help.

High Ceilings

High ceilings can also be a problem, and combined with wooden floors can create a cavernous feeling. As with the walls, anything which absorbs the sound will help.

Many halls have rafters and beams along the roofline. Hanging heavy fabric within the roofline can help trap the sound. Professionally hung acoustic baffles and panels, suspended from the ceiling, are also available in a variety of shapes and designs.

However, beware of unintended knock-on effects - one hall had to remove their professionally installed sound baffles in the vaulted ceiling as they were dripping condensation into the audience!



*Acoustic wall &
ceiling panels at
Wetheral Village
Community Hall*

*Felt murals at Newbiggin
Village Hall*

Quiet is King

Another thing to consider is volume - the more sound energy being pushed into a room, the more will bounce back off walls and ceilings. So, the louder the band (and particularly the drummer) or the film soundtrack, the worse the acoustics will be. Even a small reduction in volume can make a really big difference.

Mobile Sound Baffles (i.e. people!)

People are great sound absorbers so the more tickets sold for events the better the sound!

Building a new hall?

Often, newly built halls have the worst acoustic problems. Modern building materials, simple clean plastered walls, blinds instead of curtains and everything stored away may look great but is not good for acoustics.

When planning a new build or major refurbishment bear this in mind and think about the rooms' acoustics from the start. Also, be prepared to implement sound solutions after building work is complete, when you can identify problem areas.

Food for thought

We hope this gives you the confidence to try some simple solutions. Every hall is different and trial and error is necessary; when in doubt, try something and trust your ears, before installing it permanently. Always consider fire safety before implementing any of these solutions.



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With special thanks to insights from Adam Naylor - sound engineer with Mumbo-Jumbo, an acoustic close harmony trio that has played in halls across the UK.

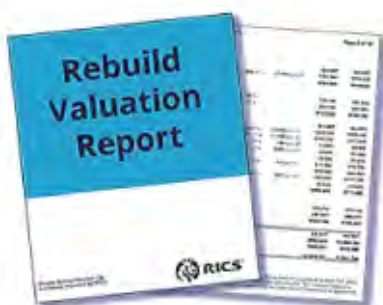


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Rural Charities Celebrate 100 Years of Village Halls

Village Halls Week 2021 recognised the contribution England's 10,000+ halls have made to rural communities since the 1920s.



Village Halls Week from 25 to 29 January this year, unlike other years, was a virtual online week offering good opportunities for Cumbrian village halls to get involved and join Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) in celebrating all the work they do.

The week was opened by Lord Gardiner and featured online events including the Domesday Book; how village halls are recovering from Covid-19; contributing to a zero-carbon future; and videos, podcasts and blogs showcasing the history of village halls and the benefits they have derived for rural communities over the years.

Here are some highlights:

- **Lord Gardiner's keynote address:** youtu.be/HKYOVFdRy4I
- **Richard Quallington's opening speech:** youtu.be/c5eJbg1P9XU
- **Deborah Clarke's opening speech:** youtu.be/wmhl17mH-JY

The initiative was led nationally by ACRE and echoed by the 38 county-based rural development charities which make up the ACRE Network.

Deborah Clarke, ACRE's Rural Evidence and Village Halls Manager said, "The past year has been one of the most challenging periods for village halls on record. Many closed due to the Government's coronavirus restrictions, yet the volunteers who manage these buildings applied for emergency funding and put in place Covid Secure measures so they could carry on providing a safe space for their community when it was most needed. Village Halls Week 2021 is in many ways, a celebration of the fact these halls are true survivors!"

The event gained much media attention and was featured in local and national press including The Times, The Telegraph, Country Life Magazine and the Daily Mail.

A highlight of the week was the success of the Domesday Book - a colourful, and arguably historical record, featuring 600+ village halls whose volunteer custodians have taken time to explain their charity's history, their response to the pandemic, and hopes for reopening and supporting their community in the future. Check out **page 9** for more information.

The increased media attention this year helped raise a substantial and positive profile for village halls all over the country, providing a focal point for local celebrations and activity. A huge thank you to all those involved in the celebrations and village hall volunteers for your hard work and commitment to your halls.

This year's campaign was sponsored by Utility Aid, Norris & Fisher and Allied Westminster and also featured contributions from the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF).

ACT is a member of the ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) Network



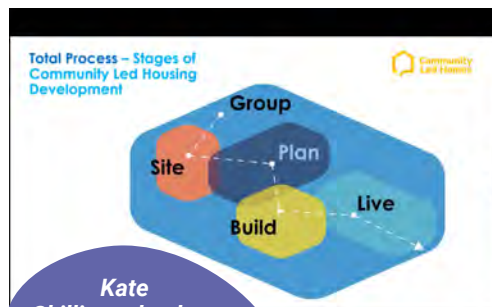
Community Led Housing Festival for Cumbria and Lancaster

Six successful events marked the online inaugural Community Led Housing (CLH) Festival which kicked off on 27 January 2021.

Events covered big topics like affordability and empty properties, and over 60 groups and partners were involved in exploring ways to move from theory to practice by building on the experience of others. With a range of great contributors, these thought-provoking events have set us up to have a real impact with communities taking steps to address their housing challenges.

Many thanks to:

- Paul Mullis from the Almshouse Association and Chris Coates who is Project Manager for the Halton Senior Co-housing Project for guiding our conversation on CLH with older people.
- Anne-Helene Sinha from CAF Venturesome, Mark Ogden from Triodos and Andy Lloyd - accredited CLH Adviser, for advising groups on financial planning and testing a business case for your project.
- Kate Skillicorn from Eden District Council and Lorraine Smyth from ACT for exploring how communities are more than a product of the housing they need.
- Jen McKeivitt from Back on the Map in Sunderland and Diane Hubbard of Green Footsteps buildings consultancy for showing us what is possible and desirable to achieve with empty properties.
- Bill Bewley from Keswick Community Housing Trust for sharing his enormous enthusiasm for problem solving and his experience of four different developments in Keswick to address the chronic lack of affordable homes in the town.
- Andy Lloyd who also talked us through some different, proven partnership models to achieve a great housing outcome for your community.

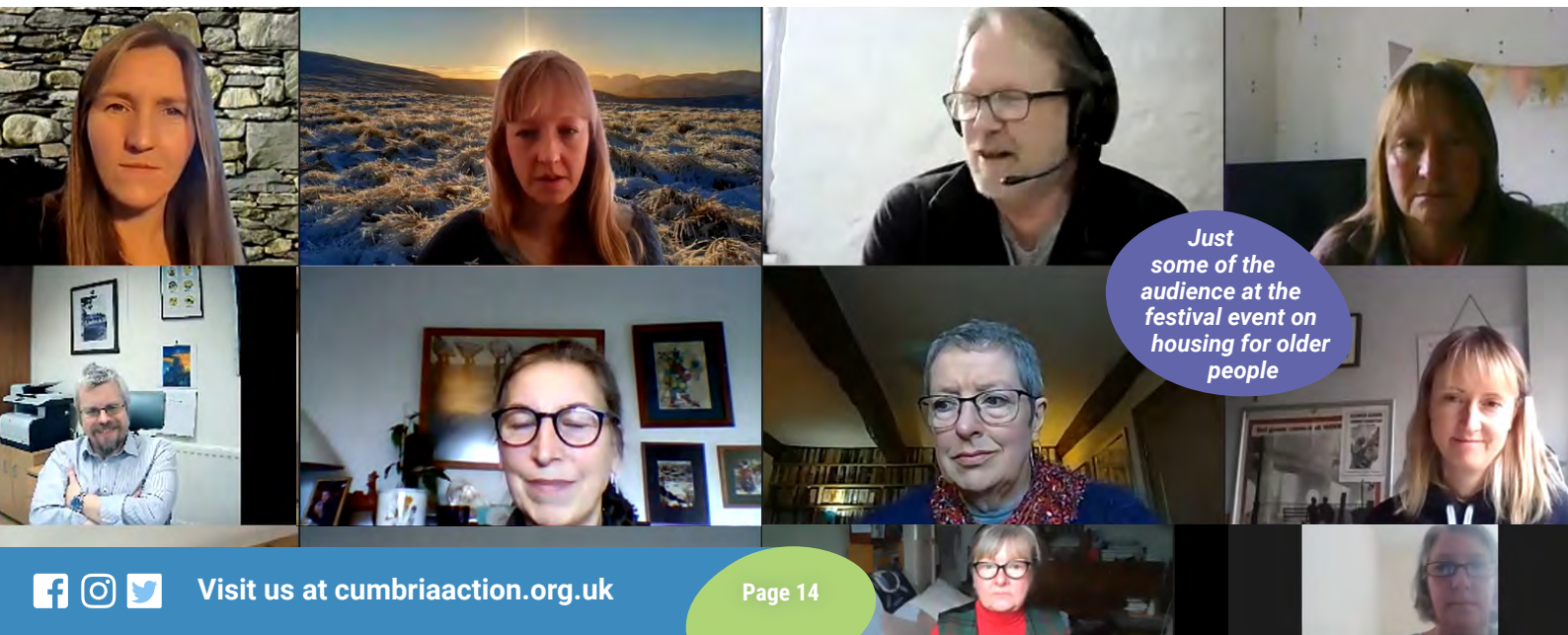


Kate Skillicorn leads on Community Led Housing at Eden District Council

Want to know more?

You can see recordings of the events on clhhub.org.uk/about-us/news-events if you missed them.

Please do get in touch if any of this makes you wonder what more your community could be doing to address local housing need by contacting franrichardson@cumbriaaction.org.uk



Neighbourliness Work



Ulverston resident receiving a 'random act of kindness'

Post-Covid Community Support

Over the last year you've probably met more new people than normally - ironic really considering the lockdown restrictions. Covid-19 has given us a licence to ask our neighbours how they're doing, it's galvanised us to get involved in community activities and - thanks to online meetings - it's helped us to network and meet new folk. Here's hoping that one of the positive post-Covid legacies will be kinder and more connected communities. So how can we 'harvest' this upsurge in 'community' and keep it going in the future - whether there's an emergency or not?

There are over 300 groups across the county busy helping out their communities. A number of these groups are now setting themselves up more formally so that they can support their community in the longer term and be in a good position to apply for funding. ACT is helping groups to do this by, for instance, guiding them through the process of setting up constitutions and getting charity status. We are also introducing groups to each other so that they can share ideas, work collaboratively and save themselves time and effort by avoiding reinventing the wheel. If you would like to meet other groups, we can coordinate this for you, just let us know.

As people's needs have changed during the pandemic, the Covid-response groups have adapted and responded to those needs. There are a variety of community projects for example: FareShares; Food Pantries and Food Banks; Good Neighbours Schemes; Community Exchanges and Village Agents. If you want to set up or adapt your own group and would like to know more about the different types of models, how they operate and what works well, we can put you in touch with others or host an online event where you can hear from other groups.

A number of community emergency response groups (more accustomed to dealing with weather-related emergencies) and Covid-response groups are teaming up to become single community response or resilience groups, such as those in Appleby and Ulverston. Ulverston Resilience Group is not unusual in saying that it has helped to build up a volunteering ethos locally and has boosted people's spirits. People who had never volunteered before are enjoying being part of a team and getting satisfaction from knowing that they're 'doing their bit'. You can read about their activities and how they're setting themselves up to support their community for the future on the Neighbourliness Works section of the ACT website.

The Big Lunch is Back!

The UK's annual weekend celebratory picnic is taking place 5-6 June 2021. It's a great way of bringing communities together and getting to know your neighbours. There's plenty of time to plan your local Big Lunch event and Eden Project Communities' website has lots of ideas, invitations and promotional material to help you: edenprojectcommunities.com. At ACT, we love to hear about your community activities so if you're planning a Big Lunch, please let us know and we can help you to promote it.





Spreading Community Cheer

As we hear about the wonderful community projects taking place, we're sharing them on our Neighbourliness Works webpage cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/neighbourliness-works. These are projects that are helping to bring communities together, raising spirits during lockdown and brightening up people's daily walks. If you would like to inspire others by sharing your projects, please get in touch with us. Here are a few you might want to try.



Giant Easter Egg Hunt

These big balloons (approx. 50cm high) are covered with papier mâché and painted with characters from children's books to create an Easter egg hunt to raise funds for Staveley playground. You could choose any theme. To become a fundraiser, make a simple treasure hunt map and ask for donations. The eggs can be placed in windows or, for a one-day event, hung from trees in large transparent bags.

Village Explore

Judith Derbyshire and other volunteers from Stainton are producing maps to encourage people to stay local by walking from home. The maps include mini challenges such as spotting interesting features, or old photographs to show how the area has changed over time.



Neighbourliness really does work! We all knew that but the pandemic has highlighted its importance as well as people's willingness to pitch in. Perhaps now is the time to harness that enthusiasm for the future. ACT would like to help you to continue supporting your community. If you want to network with other groups, find out more about different types of community models, 'future proof' your group or develop a new community group, please get in touch with us. A huge thank you to all of you who are looking out for your neighbours.

Want to know more?

For more info contact
Neighbourliness Works
Project Officer Gemma

Email: jemmametcalfegibson@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Kind Cumbria Success!

On 13 November 2020 we held our second Kind Cumbria Day. Due to the national Covid-19 lockdown it was almost totally online, apart from a visit to Clifton Primary School by ITN news. ITN's Six O'clock news report featured children celebrating Kind Cumbria Day by making and waving their 'flags of kindness' – each flag describing what kindness meant to them.



NOVEMBER 2020

Join in and think about how you can do a random act of kindness every day in November



Kind Cumbria Week

SAT	SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI
	1st Tell family how much you appreciate them	2nd Help a friend who wants to get active	3rd Make a drink for your team at work or partner if you're at home	4th Have a chat with a neighbour over the fence	5th Pick up rubbish in the street	6th Say hello to someone on your daily walk
7th Buy a "pending coffee" next time you buy one	8th Make an extra plate of Sunday lunch for a neighbour	9th Smile & say hello to everyone you meet while exercising	10th Send a text to a friend who may need cheering up	11th Check if your neighbour needs any groceries	12th Give someone a compliment	13th KIND CUMBRIA DAY! Your day to shine!
14th De-ice your neighbours car on a frosty morning	15th Send a letter to someone you've not seen for a while	16th Leave a note in your partners lunchbox	17th Remember to wash your hands & keep your distance	18th Let a car go in front of you, smile & thank other drivers	19th Bring in treats for your work colleagues if you're still working	20th Let your team finish work early for the day
21st Bake your neighbours a cake or cookies	22nd Invite someone out for a socially distanced walk	23rd Send someone an unexpected bunch of flowers	24th Stand back, allow someone through a door first	25th Make a donation to a food bank	26th Leave a tip when picking up a takeaway	27th Think about doing a chore for someone
28th Walk a friend's dog if they are shielding	29th Send a card or note to someone you care about	30th Think of all the ways you can be kind in December				

Remember to make your pledges on our website and share with us on social media using

#KindCumbriaDay

www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/kind-cumbria

Stay Kind, Cumbria!

Sponsored by **electricity north west**
Bringing energy to your door

Kind Cumbria's social media successes:

- Over 44,000 people saw and shared Kind Cumbria's stories on Twitter during November.
- 150,000 people were reached through Twitter over the year.
- 26,000 people interacted on Facebook about kindness activities over the year.
- 979 people saw and shared information on their acts of kindness on Instagram over the year.

Set in the context of the second lockdown we were really pleased with this level of participation.

Kind Cumbria Day is about random acts of kindness as shown in the calendar above. It is an ACT initiative delivered with support from Lisa Jackson of Acorn Marketing.

This year our sponsor was Electricity North West, on whose behalf we encouraged all taking part to consider the Priority Services Register for themselves or people they know: enwl.co.uk/power-cuts/priority-services-register/ helping those who need extra support in a power cut.

We are now thinking about running a third year of Kind Cumbria Day on 13 November 2021.

What do you think we should focus on?

Please let us know by contacting us at info@cumbriaaction.org.uk



Improving Rural Transport Provision

ACT has always worked with community transport groups to support better local transport provision. Recently we have also started working in a more focussed way on policy and influencing for rural transport opportunities.

It takes a long time to make any difference and the answer is always more effort - consultation, discussion, project planning, information circulation - for people in the local community. Recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the way people can and want to travel, certainly in the short term.

However, when we speak with communities and individuals, the call is always for a bus route, to replace one lost or to meet needs that everybody knows are out there. Even before Covid-19, buses ran empty throughout the county.

So, ACT designed a project to support communities to identify need and look at different solutions. Here are some ideas communities have shared with us about what local people could do to help each other out to make the journeys they need to:

- A WhatsApp group sharing information on who is going into Town and when, with spare seats in their car.
- Regular information on what travel options there are in the community, both organised - like Community Car schemes; Private - like taxi services; and the usual bus and train options.
- Creative ideas like running a shared car in the community that people can book.
- Working with the County Council to sort village or community wheels minibus journeys.
- Thinking about the vulnerable and lonely in the community and whether they can get to village hall and community events.
- Providing a shared lifts service amongst local parents for young people's clubs, sports and social activities.

None of these are new ideas, but sometimes a bit of support to think through how to organise solutions, or even more importantly - finding out what people really need and want - is just what's required to move ideas forward.

ACT 's Rural Transport offer is:

- Practical support to have a conversation about need.
- Policy and strategic influence to encourage more discussions about solutions and the financial and technical support to create sustainable solutions.

Are you interested in being involved? Can you imagine your community coming together to make a difference? Are there people in your community with needs that local solutions could address? Do you want to influence and effect future travel and transport policy?

It is important to be aware of wider rural transport initiatives and policy. Cumbria County Council are developing a Transport Infrastructure Plan this spring. The Lake District National Park Partnership are drawing together a Sustainable Transport Policy for locals and visitors. ACT is involved with both initiatives and will encourage you to be involved too as well as keeping you informed and speaking up for rural travel issues.

As we emerge from the pandemic there has never been such an appetite to reduce carbon in our communities, and there has never been a better time to look at local community travel.

If this interests you, please do get in touch with Lorraine Smyth by email: Lorraines@cumbriaaction.org.uk
Let's make a difference!



Inform, Involve and Engage

Cleator Moor and Millom Towns Fund Projects consultation process.

Towns Fund [©]

The Towns Fund is a programme launched by the Government for small to medium sized towns in England to improve their economy. In 2020, Cleator Moor and Millom were invited by Government, along with 99 other towns, to develop proposals for a Town Deal bid, as part of the £3.6 billion fund. ACT were commissioned by Copeland Borough Council to support the two boards to 'Inform, Involve and Engage' their communities and stakeholders in developing each town's Town Deal bid.

The bid, which is essentially a locally-owned, long term, economic growth programme, was developed over six months with consultants - HATCH, Copeland Borough Council, many stakeholders and ACT.

Due to the pandemic, face-to-face meetings, events and workshops were not an option, but communities still needed to be informed, involved and engaged in the planning of projects for their areas.

ACT supported local board members to carry out genuine community engagement with:

- Three face-to-face workshops (pre-Covid) with local young people, families, and sports groups to develop initial ideas.
- Use of the #MyTown Government-designed online comment forum. Millom achieved the most community responses of any town in the country.
- Board members consulting 1-2-1 (remotely) with people in the community about ideas for economic regeneration in their town.
- A creative arts competition in Cleator Moor entitled 'Past, Present & Future'.
- The Millom 'Around the Combe' local magazine and Facebook pages used extensively, to inform 11,000 people and promoted a photo competition.
- Zoom events were held with local business forums and stakeholders
- SurveyMonkey questionnaires received over 500 responses from the community supporting the bid and detailing their views.
- A community newsletter 'Cleator Moor Matters' was developed both in print and online.

Nina Fisher's
winning entry in the
Millom photography
competition



Sian Price's
winning entry in the
Cleator Moor digital
art competition

What Next?

Cleator Moor and Millom's Towns Fund bids were submitted in January 2021. Within each bid a strategy for future engagement and consultation was included to run the life of the programme. Government will make an announcement of any funding offer in April 2021. If the bids are successful, the town boards will have 12 months to develop a full business case for each project area in order to draw down the awarded funding.

ACT celebrates the work of the community town board members in the Inform, Involve and Engage programmes and wishes them success with their town bids.

A Tricky Year at Work

This time last year we produced a newsletter which did not even mention the word 'pandemic'. The Spring 2020 Gazette is full of our usual cheering and inspiring stories from around the county and correctly gives the impression of a staff team full of enthusiasm for what they do, with plans for the future. Within three weeks of that publication, the country went into Lockdown for the first time, in the saga that has become Covid-19.



As we worked together to gather the news and stories for this Gazette, it struck me that the ACT team have quietly revolutionised the way we work. Yes, this has been of necessity and, no, we are not alone in the changes we have made. But, sometimes we forget to reflect on things like this and to be grateful for what has remained constant throughout.

You may be surprised to learn that one of our team tested positive for Covid, and another has a family member who was hospitalised by it. Long term health conditions, family bereavement, school closures and prolonged periods of family shielding and self-isolation; we are dealing with all these things and lots besides, that perhaps we don't talk about.



The reason for saying all this is that whilst on the surface it has nothing to do with the day jobs we all do, of course it does. It absolutely does. Most employers can deal with one person having a difficult time - and some do it better than others. Employers this year have had to deal with many people having a terrible combination of personal and work-related challenges and anxiety levels are unquestionably through the roof.

We're not front line, and we're not on zero-hours contracts. The team at ACT for many years have done non-essential jobs, in the language of the pandemic, which have required flexibility and hard work, but the organisation has always been fair. At ACT we are lucky enough to have a Board who prioritise our well-being and have made every effort to support each member of staff as lives have been rocked by one thing after another.

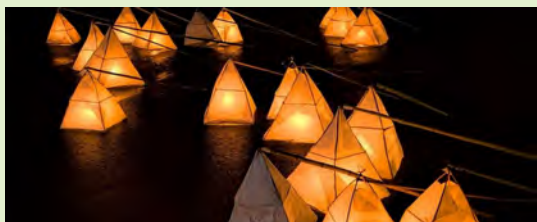
It's worth mentioning too that, as the pandemic clock counted down in March, we recruited our newest staff member, who has been inducted to the organisation remotely and has got on with the job in these strange circumstances with extraordinary good-humour and equanimity.

No doubt some of this will resonate with you if you employ people or if you work as part of a team, or if you have a family where things have not gone according to plan over the last 12 months. I just wanted to say thankyou to all those who have made the effort to make life a little easier for their colleagues or employees - at ACT and anywhere else. Whether this has been organising on-line team socials, collaborating on work in new ways while we learn by doing, taking the time for a quiet conversation or intelligent use of furlough so that the organisation and the employee can survive. For many of us the kindnesses have made the difference between coping and not coping.



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

*Words by Fran Richardson, CLH Hub Manager,
ACTion with Communities in Cumbria.*



Highlighting Eden

Highlights Rural Touring and Eden District Council light up the district with arts and culture this Spring Equinox.



highlights
rural touring scheme

Want to know more?

Workshops and activities are available at highlightsnorth.co.uk

If you work with a school or community group and are interested in promoting the activities please contact maureen@highlightsnorth.co.uk

Highlights Rural Touring and Eden District Council are working together to invite communities across Eden to engage in Covid-secure arts activities and events, on and offline. 'Highlighting Eden' hopes to find some light within the current darkness, with activities centred around themes of light, rebirth and growth to fit in with the coming of spring.

Working with a number of regional artists and makers, the programme leads up to a Light Up festival around the March Spring Equinox on Saturday 20 March - inviting individuals, businesses and schools to light up 1000 windows, doorsteps or gardens with homemade lanterns.

Prior to 20 March, Highlights will be hosting online workshops in lantern making, writing, singing and performance and inviting people of all ages and abilities to join in. Additional activities include storytelling events, an augmented reality game and a digital collection of locally collected stories.

In a joint statement Eden District Council Leader, Cllr. Virginia Taylor and Communities Portfolio Holder, Cllr. Lissie Sharp said: "We want Eden to be a place where the creativity of everyone is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where everyone can access high-quality cultural experiences too. This fabulous project from Highlights is a step along that way."

Postcode Neighbourhood Trust

Between February and October 2021 Postcode Neighbourhood Trust will be accepting applications from smaller charities and good causes carrying out activities in the north of England under the following themes:



- Improving mental wellbeing
- Enabling community participation in the arts
- Preventing or reducing the impact of poverty
- Supporting marginalised groups and promoting equality
- Improving biodiversity and green spaces
- Enabling participation in physical activity
- Responding to the climate emergency and promoting sustainability
- Increasing community access to outdoor space

Grants are available for smaller organisations (with an annual income of less than £1 million, preferably under £500,000) to make a difference to their community.

The grants are in two levels:

- **Registered charities: £500 - £20,000**
- **Organisations which are not registered charities (Including other recognised structures such as CICs and BenComs): £500 - £2,000**

The fund is open to applications on or around the 1st of every month and closes 2 weeks later or when 100 applications have been received. It will then be closed and re-opened to applications the following month. The next round opens on 1 March and closes on 15 March at 5pm.

For more information and detail of future deadline dates visit:
postcodeneighbourhoodtrust.org.uk/apply-for-a-grant



Sustainable Transport & Tourism: Vital for Zero Carbon Cumbria

The Guardian and other national publications have picked up on the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership with its ambition for Cumbria to become the UK's first carbon-neutral county. The Lottery funded partnership is led by Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfs) and ACT is a member of this 68-organisation strong group.

There are big challenges, of course, but the partnership starts from a position of knowledge. In February 2020, they commissioned 'A Carbon Baseline for Cumbria', produced by Professor Mike Berners-Lee, of Small World Consulting, and Lancaster University's Environment Centre.

The report breaks Cumbrian emissions down into those based on 'extraction', 'consumption' and 'production' and it sets out the levels of reduction required in each area to reach net-zero.

The baseline report highlights the specific challenge for Cumbria's tourism economy; the impact of 48 million people visiting in 2019 indicate that making tourism more sustainable (less carbon emitting) will be a huge contributor to the achievement of overall goals. This includes a significant shift in visitor transport options (how they get here and how they get about) as well as encouraging more sustainable entertainment and eating choices once they are here.

Want to know more?

To find out more about the work of the Zero Carbon Partnership visit the CAfs website: cafs.org.uk/2020/01/30/meet-the-zero-carbon-cumbria-partnership/

National Park Launch 'Pop-up' Campsite Guide

Ahead of this summer's potential staycation boom, the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) has compiled an information pack and is hosting online sessions for farmers and land managers on how to create a pop-up campsite.



A pop-up campsite is the temporary use of a field for a small number of tents, for a maximum of 56 days, to give visitors to the Lake District the chance to enjoy a night under the stars. No special licence is required and as long as no alterations are being made to the property planning permission isn't needed. However, there is a need to undertake a full risk assessment, get suitable insurance, provide toilet and water facilities and arrange litter collection.

The National Park's Farming Officer, Andrea Meanwell said: "Last year we saw an unprecedented number of visitors to the Lake District National Park, many of whom were looking for campsites. If we have more campsite spaces available we will hopefully reduce 'fly camping' and litter throughout the park. We are anticipating similar numbers of visitors this year and this session will give farmers and landowners a chance to gauge if this could be an opportunity for them."

The free online information session will be held via zoom on 10 March but register in advance as places are limited. More information can be found here: lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes





WESTMORLAND DALES

Picturing the Westmorland Dales

During autumn 2020, children in the Westmorland Dales explored the landscape through land art. The Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership Scheme worked with Kirkby Stephen Community Arts, land artists 'Stomping Ground' and six local primary schools to create land art pieces to celebrate local landmarks and nature. The project helped connect children with the natural world encouraging them to look closely at natural materials such as sticks, pine cones, soil, leaves and wool and use them to create beautiful art pieces.

Images created by the pupils include Hardendale Cairn, Smardale Viaduct, Nine Standards, a red squirrel, a short-eared owl, Orton Scar monument and a Tebay fell pony. Jon Chappell from M60TV filmed and photographed the sessions which showcase their work and bring the schools together in this unifying project. It highlights the children's connection to their villages and creates a sense of place and a sense of hope for the future.

Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership extend their gratitude to the children and teachers that made it happen: Orton C of E School, Crosby Ravensworth C of E School, Asby Endowed School, Tebay Primary, Shap CE Primary and Kirkby Stephen Primary School.

Enjoy the short film 'Picturing the Westmorland Dales' here: friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/land-art

Want to know more?

For further information about the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership Scheme please email Nicola Estill:

nicola-estill@fld.org.uk



Red squirrel
created by pupils
at Crosby
Ravensworth CE
School

Carlisle and Eden contact:

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Email: hellenaitken@cumbriaaction.org.uk

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Katie Milburn - Support Officer

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To speak with Lorraine Smyth, ACT Chief Executive, or contact Dani Hall at ACT reception:

Tel: 01768 425666

Email: info@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Previous editions of the ACT Gazette are online at: cumbriaaction.org.uk/Resources-Publications/ACT-Gazette

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria champions community and rural issues



ACT would like to thank the following for supporting us and our Community Buildings Advice Service for 2020-2021:



ACTion with Communities in Cumbria: registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria, Charity no. 1080875, Company no. 3957858. Offices O - Q Skirsgill Business Park, Penrith, CA11 0FA

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