

North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership



Annual Report 2014 - 2015

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The aim of the Partnership is to improve the quality of life of those living, working and visiting the area.

The Partnership complements the work of the Parish Councils, in its ability to source and secure funding which would not be available to Parish Councils.

Trustees Year ending 31st August 2015

Peter Loyd Esq.

President

Mr. Tim Bird

Chairman, Kielder Resident

Mrs Christine Billany

Business in Bellingham

Mrs Christine Bragg

Vice Chairman Bellingham Resident

Miss Charlotte Brown

Business in Bellingham and Bellingham

Resident

Cllr Frank Mattinson

Bellingham Resident

Mr Neil Denham

Bellingham Resident and business based

in

Bellingham

All trustees can be contacted through the NT&RCP

Parishes within the Partnership

Bellingham

Byrness and Rochester
Coursenside
Falstone
Kielder
Otterburn
Tarsset and Greystead

North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership

**The Station House
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Year Ending 31st August 2015

1. **Bankers**
Auditors
Bellingham

Co-operative Bank
Tyne Rede Accountants, Station Yard,

Charity number
Company number

1140932
7348393

Chairman's Report 2014 – 2015

For the Partnership it has been another demanding year, but one in which I feel we have risen to the challenge. Funding continues to be difficult to source and where available tends to be project based with clear and quantifiable criteria for delivery and monitoring.

This year, after a difficult previous year we have tried to focus on 3 main areas.

Firstly,

To continue working to support both older residents and young people.

Secondly,

To find ways of supporting local businesses by trying to increase footfall in the local area.

And finally,

As last year, with grant funding becoming ever more difficult to source, to continue to focus on sustainability for the Partnership through self-funding, this will allow the partnership to continue to have a real impact within the community in the coming years.

Ongoing projects,

Firstly a failure, well not really a failure but a project that we have been unable to resurrect this year, we are still seeking a way forward

Once again The Bellingham Blast cycling event, which had run very successfully in previous years, did not take place. The Blast was an expensive event to produce and, although we are still looking for a solution to funding we have yet to find a way forward for this event. We still believe the fundamental idea is a good way of bringing tourists to the area and are hoping to work closely with one or more local businesses to re invigorate this project or a very similar one, in coming years.

As in previous years, despite the initial funding from Triangle Trust coming to an end some time ago, we have continued to provide transport and outings, for our older residents, to places not easily reached by public transport and several outings have been enjoyed by local residents over the year. Once again we have had to continue to consider the cost, especially as there has been no grant funding available. We have every intention to continue with these trips over the coming years and, where we can, we will continue to offer these free of charge, however for some trips it may be necessary to ask for a small contribution towards expenses. We are however actively seeking new grant funding to enable us to carry on providing these very popular trips free of charge, now and into the future.

One of our longest running projects, The drop in centre and The Cadet Force meeting space is still going from strength to strength, The Partnership continues receive little or no funding for this project and fund it solely from any profits made by the partnership. There

has always been a risk that we would no longer be able to afford to fund this project and over the last year we have been looking for ways to keep this project on a secure footing. The Reed hall trustees continue to offer a home for the Drop-in centre and the Cadet Force and this is greatly appreciated by the Partnership and more importantly facilitates our ongoing support. Both groups should be secure in the new venue for many years to come and we look forward to supporting them into the future.

Once again, and with the support of Bellingham Golf Club, we held the annual Christmas Lunch, for local residents. This has been the fourth year that we provided a full Christmas lunch with entertainment. A good time was had by all. My thanks go to The Bellingham Golf club for their very kind support and to the many local businesses that supported this event with donations of food and services, as well as the many community volunteers who gave their time and expertise to make this event such a success.

As well as the projects listed above we have also been pleased to work with Charlotte Loyd on the production and printing of the Churches Together “directory of business services in the Bellingham area”, once again we were able to provide production and printing of the booklets free of charge, enabling a wide circulation of this useful guide which is available to both locals and tourists alike.

Sustainability

As discussed last year and every year, as public funding streams continue to be harder and harder to source the only way for the Partnership to secure its future is for us to be completely self-reliant, so any grant funding purely provides “the icing on the cake”. This has not changed. Over the last twelve months we have proved that we can survive on the income we have, however survival is not the aim, the aim is to be able to assist and enhance the local community and for this we will still need funds. Grant funding is still both difficult to find and only ever a temporary solution. We aim to get back to a position where the office is, once again, regularly open to give the community more access to subsidised printing facilities and have someone available to assist any members of the community with computer services such as registering for unemployment benefits and the various web based services many people now need to be able to access. This is very much a wish at the moment and much of the coming year will be taken up with looking into how we can best address the situation and how we can continue to best serve the community.

We are currently working with a local business on a project which we hope, when successful, will increase footfall in Bellingham, thereby benefiting local traders, provide an income stream for existing businesses within the community and the business we are working with, as well as generating some income for the Partnership, another small but important step towards true sustainability. More of this in the future when it comes to fruition later this year.

At this point I would like to thank all of our Trustees for their time and commitment to the Partnership and its aims, Especially Neil Denham for his knowledge and help with our new foray into social media, Christine Bragg and Frank Mattinson for their continued and invaluable support, Christine Bragg, once more, for stepping in as secretary, general coordinator and driving force over this last year, and, as always, a special thank you to Terry Bragg for all his behind the scenes efforts without which, amongst many other things, boilers would cease to function, pipes would continue to leak many other problems

would not be resolved.

Last year I finished of with the comment “please think about what you could offer, we have lost several trustees over the last couple of years and really do need new people to replace them,

It is my great pleasure to report that two people did exactly that, We are extremely pleased to have not only two new trustees, but two new trustees with great business acumen and drive, Christine Billany of The Carriages Tea Rooms and Charlotte Brown who owns and runs The Country Store, Both bring to the Partnership a great deal of talent and expertise in fields that compliment the experience of the other trustees. Thank you both for giving up your time to help the community,

I would also like to express our thanks to the partner organisations we have worked with throughout the year, especially The Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts. The Forestry Commission and Chris Gillie from Tyne Rede Accountancy for auditing our accounts and giving sound advice throughout the year.

Finally and as always our thanks go to you, the community. I feel very proud to have worked with and for such a great bunch of people, as you finish reading this I make no apology for saying, once again, please think about what you could offer, we still have vacancies for trustees and really do need new people to add to the expertise of the existing trustees, “many hands make light work” and I am sure every one of you could bring something to the board that could help the local community, Please take this opportunity to consider whether you could find time to join us.

why not come and have a chat about becoming a trustee.

Chairman, North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership

The Trustees Report

The Partnership complements the work of the Parish Councils, in its ability to source and secure funding for projects which would not be available to Parish Councils. It also, where possible supports and encourages sustainable and economic development within the communities by providing advice and support to businesses and voluntary community groups.

Background

Bellingham Community Trust was set up in 1996 to secure funding for and carry out projects identified in the Bellingham Parish Plan. It became a registered charity in 2000 and after requests for support from the wider communities North and West of Bellingham, and after appropriate consultation, at the 2005 AGM it was agreed to adopt the title of North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership. This is registered with the Charities Commission.

The Partnership is managed a a board of up to 12 Trustees who represent the area, and have included, Parish Councillors, business representatives and general members of the local community.

Until October 2014 the Partnership was supported by a Partnership Officer, due to lack of funding it was necessary to make our officer redundant, therefore since October 2014 the work of the partnership has been managed on a voluntary basis by the trustees. The Partnership Office is based in Bellingham in the Station House. The Partnership provides at Station House office accommodation at affordable rents to small local businesses. It is Landlord to the Heritage Centre and has allowed it to expand into Station Yard with two Mark1 Railway Carriages one of which accommodates a Tearoom.

The Partnership also supports Youth Groups by providing and supporting a facility for the Youth Club and Army Cadets at Reed Hall.

The Workplan

The Trustees reviewed the Business Plan in March 2012. The Plan now comprises seven main objectives.

1. Improve access to services for the more isolated in the Partnership Area
2. Encourage and support projects to benefit young people
3. Encourage and support projects to expand provision for the elderly
4. Improve access to training and work opportunities, and support Business development
5. Become a more self-sustaining organisation
6. Raise the profile of the Partnership to increase understanding and awareness in the local community
7. Support Businesses and encourage Tourism

During this year without officer support, the trustees have concentrated on the young, through youth provision, expanding provision for the elderly and supporting Businesses and encouraging tourism.

Activities

Support for young people

The Partnership since 2008 have raised funds and supported and managed a facility for young people in the community. Since March 2014 this has been at Reed Hall with the kind permission of the trustees of Reed Hall. Reed Hall now has colourful and comfortable seating areas and WiFi with laptops, printer and ipads and a television as well as a dedicated storage area, for which the Partnership was able to secure funding, and as the hall has some outside space the partnership have provided additional outside lighting.

This facility has been shared by the Youth Club (Drop in Centre) and the Army Cadet Force.

The Partnership area is one of the most sparsely populated in England. 0.22 per hectare compared to 3.77 for England, therefore rural isolation is a real issue particularly affecting young and old. Fuel poverty and transport are a real issue in these isolated communities with no buses between Bellingham and Hexham (the nearest town) in the evening. Secondary School children already travel considerable distances to schools in either Haydon Bridge (20 miles) or Hexham (17 miles) with little opportunity because of lack of transport to participate in after school activities. A place to meet, learn and enjoy locally is therefore vital.

A Youth Club supported by qualified Youth Workers provided by the Youth Service meets on one and sometimes two evenings in the week in term time as well as organising some events and outings during holiday times.

The Army Cadet Force is now well established and supported and also meets one or two evenings in the week and provides many opportunities to engage in outward bound activities and training.

Support for Older Residents

The Partnership has continued to fund and provide coach trips for older residents for shopping and interest to places not easily accessible by public transport. This year included a trip to Gretna shopping outlet and Houghton Hall Garden Centre and a trip to Boundary Mill and the Range. These trips have been extremely popular and over subscribed so larger buses have been hired.

The Partnership has also provided the annual Christmas Lunch. This event is also very well attended and much appreciated. The Golf Club have kindly provided the venue and with a full traditional Christmas Lunch with wine and entertainment a very good time is enjoyed by all at a time that can be isolating for some of our older residents.

Encouraging Tourism through Events

The Partnership have not been in a position to organise any major events during 2015, however smaller more manageable events are planned for 2016

Supporting Business

Fountain Cottage

Most of the Partnerships time, during 2013 – 14 had been focused on securing by asset transfer Fountain Cottage from Northumberland County Council. The process was lengthy and frustrating, but acquiring the building would have enabled the Partnership to transform the dilapidated building, fast becoming an eyesore in the village, into a thriving business hub with office accommodation for 5 or 6 small businesses and a retail outlet for locally based craft workers, artists and artisans., which in turn would encourage tourism.

Although some funding was secured and the County Council agreed to transfer ownership, unfortunately the Partnership was unable to persuade the County Council to legally finalise transferring the building to the Partnership within funders timescales.

By August 2014 the trustees made the decision to notify the County Council that we would not be proceeding with the transfer.

This was a very disappointing outcome for the Partnership, the village and the small businesses looking for suitable affordable premises. The financial implications for the Partnership also has resulted in the loss of our Partnership Officer and the need to rebuild finances.

The Partnership have however continued to finance and produce the Churches together guide which provides details of all business services and community organisations in the area and benefits all in the community.

Sustainability and Future Plans

The Partnership is fortunate to have Station House and the Station Yard complex as an asset generating rent from the local businesses in Station House and from the Heritage Centre.

Our year started with little or no reserves after fulfilling our obligations for redundancy payments to our Partnership Officer.

In April 2015 the Heritage Centre's rent was due for review, in line with the lease agreement the Centre was notified in January of the need to review and increase the rent in line with inflation. A clause was also added to include provision of the railway carriages although no rent would be charged provided the Heritage Centre limited rent increases to the carriages Tea Room to the same inflationary increases they enjoyed.

Unfortunately the Heritage Centres chairman was not prepared to enter into any discussion with the Partnership and there followed a prolonged period of negotiation with the Heritage Centres Solicitor interspersed with long delays and rent or parts of rent withheld or delayed.

We are happy to report that at the time of writing this report a new lease is in place, rent is now received regularly by standing order and a new chairman and committee of trustees now manage the Heritage Centre and are working with the Partnership and the community to the benefit of all.

The difficulties experienced however have highlighted the need to maintain a reasonable reserve in order to maintain the services and organisations in the community who need and benefit from our support.

Our premises are fully occupied and we have received a number of requests for additional accommodation.

Whereas local fund raising will concentrate on small easily managed events making use of Station Yard such as boot sales and craft fairs, we intend to explore funding opportunities to build/expand to provide more much need accommodation for local businesses within the Station Yard complex.

Reserves Policy

The charitable company aims to match it's income with ongoing projects in the period. However it seeks to build sufficient reserves to allow it to cover one year of support costs should new funding not be available

Risk Management

The trustees have examined the major strategic, business and operational risks which the charity faces and confirm that systems for regular reporting are in place to lessen these risks.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charities Commission in exercising their powers or duties.