

For the Partnership, after a couple of difficult years, 2016/17 has been a better year altogether. Although funding continues to be difficult to find, during the latter part of the year we were successful in finding some funding for several projects. A grant from the Co-op Community Fund was split equally between coach trips and the youth club, and grants from EDF and the Community Chest have enabled us to move forward with refurbishment the old Lloyds bank building. Our key aims for the next year have not changed and are,

Firstly,

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

Secondly,

To find ways of supporting local businesses

And finally,

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,

As in previous years we have continued to provide outings, to places not easily reached by public transport, for our older residents, As always we have had to consider the costs, especially as there has been little grant funding available. During autumn 2017 we organized two free coach trips, each filling a forty-nine seat coach, the first visiting Carlisle and the second, a trip to Boundary Mill, for pre-Christmas shopping. The trips were well received, and we have every intention of continuing with similar trips over the coming years. As mentioned previously we were successful in securing funding from the CO-OP Community Fund, receiving £1770, half of which will go towards funding future coach trips, which we will endeavor to offer free of charge, however for some trips it may be necessary to ask for a small contribution towards expenses. We are still actively seeking new grant funding to enable us to carry on providing more of these very popular trips free of charge.

Two of our longest running projects, the drop in centre and The Cadet Force meeting space are continuing to go from strength to strength, The Partnership receives little funding for these projects and mainly funds them from income. The Reed hall trustees continue to offer a home, free of charge, for the Drop-in centre and the Cadet Force and this is greatly appreciated by the Partnership and more importantly facilitates our ongoing support. Over past year a joint project with RTC has shown that benefits can be gained by working closely with other organisations. Gemma Nixon, a youth worker employed by RTC, is now working with Bellingham youth group, as well as with Otterburn and other outlying youth groups. She has reinvigorated Bellingham youth group, now having more than 30 regular attendees, by organizing both local and interclub activities along with various social, recreational and educational trips. The youth club has also benefitted from half of the grant secured from the coop, contributing to both Gemma's salary and to the various activities Both groups should be secure in the Reed hall for many years to come and we look forward to supporting them into the future.

Once more, and with the support of Bellingham Golf Club, we held the annual Christmas Lunch for our older local residents. This is the sixth year that we have provided a full Christmas lunch with entertainment. A good time was had by all, despite the snow and ice attempting to thwart our plans. 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, expertise and 4x4 taxi service to make this event such a success.

we have also been pleased to, once again, 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 public funding streams continue to be difficult to source, the only way for the Partnership to secure its future is to be completely self-reliant, so any grant funding purely provides “the icing on the cake”. Over the last twelve months we have worked hard towards our aim to be fully sustainable through self funding, to enable us to continue to assist and enhance the local community and businesses. Grant funding is only ever a temporary solution, having to apply for grants before we can commit to a specific project can become a real barrier to those projects.

We also aim to open the office regularly, to give the community access to a computer, and help where needed, to access the many on-line services which are now part of everyday life (social security, job centre etc.), offer other services such as subsidised printing and the advertising of local job opportunities, as well as having enough money in the bank to initiate projects without necessarily worrying about finding grant funding first. This is, at the moment, still very much a wish, the first step being the ability to employ a partnership officer .

Earlier this year, and with the assistance of Mr. Peter Loyd, The Partnership has taken a 25 year lease on the ground floor of the old Lloyds Bank building. Funding has been secured from County Council Community Chest and EDF Green Rigg Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund and the Partnerships own resources to undertake refurbishments to provide more office accommodation for local businesses. This will generate more income. We are delighted to announce that TyneRede Accountancy will rent this accommodation and that a local architect has agreed to move to the office, at Station House, vacated by TyneRede Accountancy. This development not only supports Business Development, creates jobs and benefits the local economy but is also another step to long term security for the partnership and will enable us to continue to move forward with new projects.

Outline Planning Permission has now been secured to position up to four 'pods' at Station Yard in the area between Station House and the Parcel Shed. These units will be configurable depending on the use requested, be it retail, office, or small manufacturing spaces. The Trustees will look at funding sources when the Lloyds Bank

project is established and running well. In addition to the 4 pods we have also found space behind the Biomass unit to place a new Kitchen unit and possible retail space for the Carriages Tea Room, once again demonstrating the benefits of working together with local businesses and organisations.

At this point I would like to thank our Trustees for their time and commitment to the Partnership and its aims, Especially 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, chasing and securing grants, and, possibly most important of all, facilitating our trustee meetings. I would also like to thank our newest Trustees, Mike Blackith, Margaret Wilson, Ken Little, Charlotte Brown and Neil Denham, throughout the year their perspective, views and thoughts have been a valuable asset to the Partnership and I hope they wish to carry on contributing for many years to come. As always, a special thank you must go to Terry Bragg for all his behind the scenes efforts, without which, boilers would cease to function, pipes would continue to leak and many other problems would not be resolved.

This year I would also like to offer a special thanks to Peter Loyd, not only for his continued support, but also for his assistance in our acquisition of the old Lloyds bank premises.

I would also like to thank the partner organisations we have worked with throughout the year, first and foremost RTC for introducing us to Gemma Nixon our new Youth worker, who has moved the youth group to a new era of success, and also to Chris Gillie from TyneRede Accountancy for auditing our accounts and giving sound advice throughout the year.

Finally, 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. If not as a trustee, Gemma would be more than pleased if anyone would like to volunteer to help out at the youth club, full training would be available, and it would not require a commitment to attend every youth club night, just one or two nights per term would be a great help. why not come and have a chat about becoming a trustee or a volunteer.

Tim Bird

Chairman, North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership