

75 years of ACTion with Communities in Cumbria



Annual Review 2023/24



Welcome to our 75th annual review



Our chair Jim Webster says: 'This annual review covers our 2023/24 activities as well as a brief look back to 1948

I took over the Chair's role in September 2023 from Joanne Tate. We were sorry to see her stand down & thank her for her dedication & service over the years.

It's been a genuinely exciting year with improving funding, new projects & continuing engagement from long term partners.

Thanks to both my fellow trustees & the staff team for being such excellent people to work with in our efforts to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by where they live. We have been working on this for 75 years.'

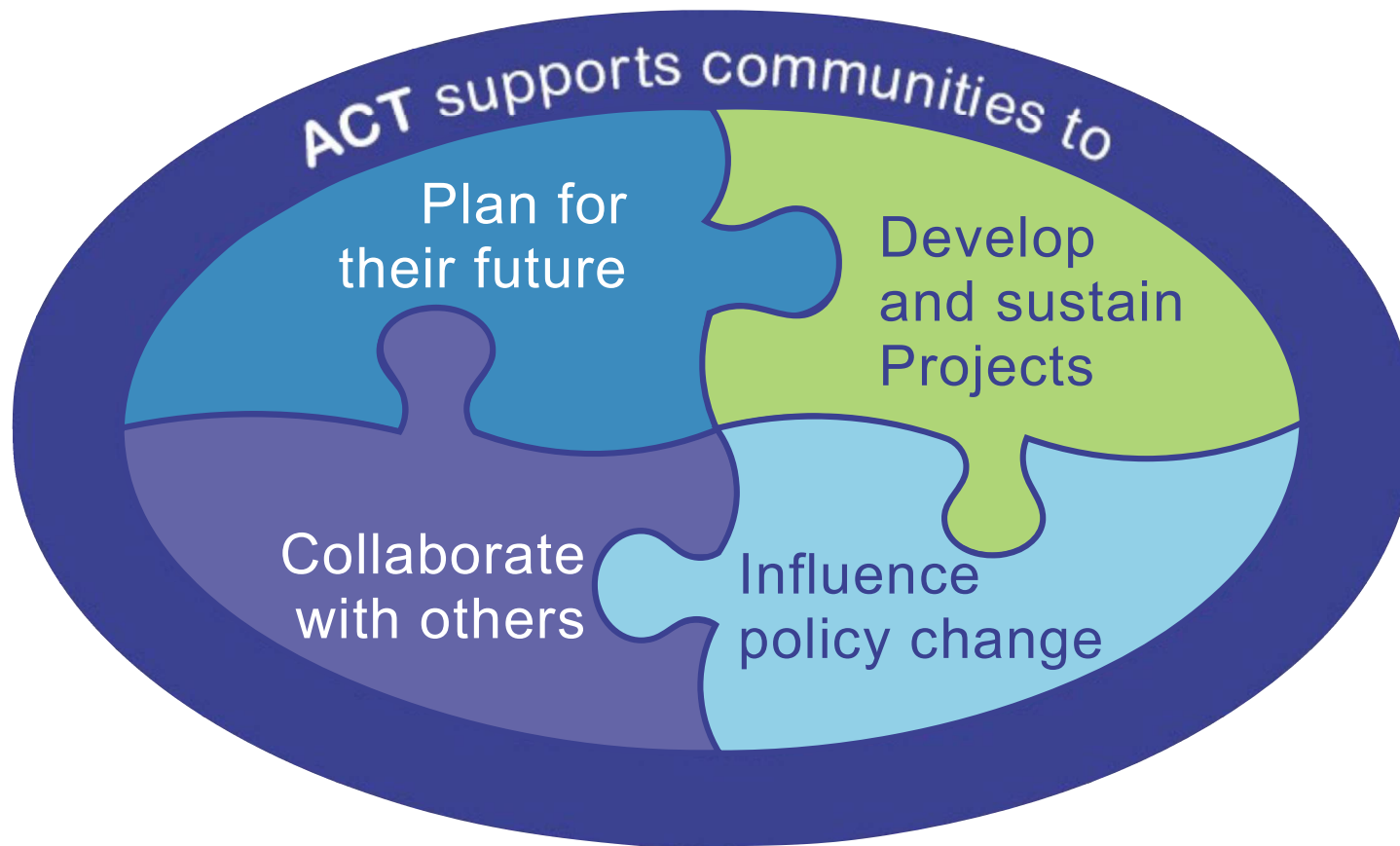


Some of the ACT Trustees and staff (Left to right): Juan Shimmin (T), Sam Bramwell (T), Hellen Aitken (S), Dani Hall (S), Alan McViety (T), Fran Richardson (S), Jozi Brown (S), Sue Castle-Clarke (T), Jim Webster (T), Carole Barr (S), Debbie Freake (T)

ACT's Mission



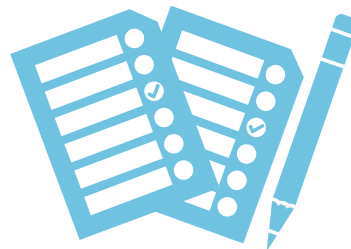
ACTion **with communities in Cumbria**
champions community and rural issues



The year in numbers



Secured for Cumbrian projects

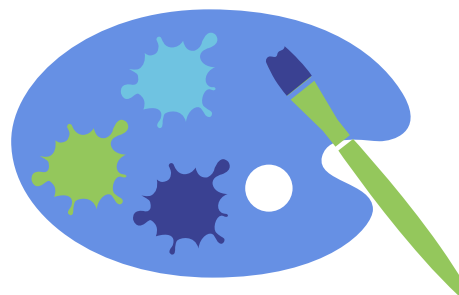


Helped develop 8 community plans



355 community building enquiries

3,000 people consulted on sustainable transport



4,000 people involved in creative activity in West Cumbria



Social Value approx £5 for every £1 invested on selected work

The year in numbers

A blue icon of a computer monitor with a white screen. The screen displays the text 'Over 590 enquiries in total!'.

**Over 590
enquiries in total!**



Our 75th Anniversary celebration



Staff with the 1948 Massey-Ferguson Tractor

There is a look back at the issues that communities faced in 1948 later in the review

We celebrated our Anniversary in September of 2023 with a Garden Party and the commission of a unique song. Thanks to Stefan Escritt, our artistic advisor, for helping to mastermind the event.



Quickbeam A-cappella group performing

In Memory of: Olive Clarke, OBE. JP. DL. FRAGS.



We were delighted that our vice-president Olive joined us at our 75th celebration and planted a commemorative tree



2008



2013



2022



2023

Olive passed away peacefully in December 2023 at the age of 101. She was still living independently to the end. We celebrate her life which was well lived and fondly remember her support to ACT over many years.

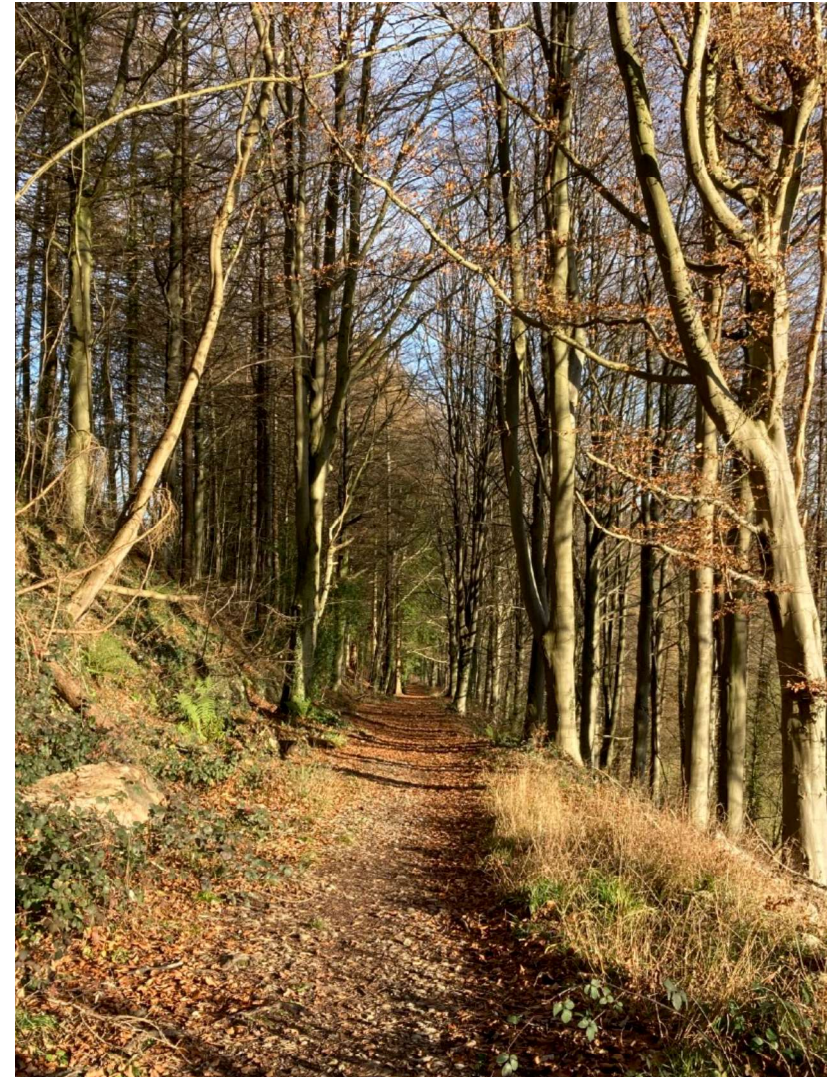


For more information about Olive and her amazing impact:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_Clarke

Influencing and changing policy



- We've worked with the Cumbria Poverty Reference Group, Cumberland Council's Rurality Working Group and Cumberland Food Partnership members to:
 - ✦ Highlight the challenges of rural poverty (incl. fuel poverty)
 - ✦ Summarise available statistics
 - ✦ and share examples of good practice from within and outside Cumbria
- We've helped develop the Eden Community Health Wellbeing and Equity Partnership and delivered a commission on Rural Poverty in the Eden Area
- We've shared the views, experiences and needs of the rural communities that we work alongside



Influencing and changing policy



- The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation have kindly continued their support of our Lake District Partnership Collaboration Hub. They've seen how our work on: spatial planning; protecting our land and waterscapes; affordable housing; and sustainable transport and transport pressures have all created discussion. Our creative approach is helping communities engage with policy makers and statutory organisations to tackle these enduring and difficult issues.
- Through the Rural Housing Enabling Partnership, funded by DEFRA, we are developing a stronger relationship with Homes England. This project will gather evidence for greater investment in the delivery of local homes, which can support the life blood of our rural places.

Developing Projects

We helped 9 communities secure a total of £83,275 from Electricity North West Storm Arwen resilience fund

- We advised communities on improving facilities to act as 'emergency hubs' and promoted events and information to help them equip themselves and plan for emergencies
- We've been part of local and national conversations for rural communities' concerns on the 'digital switchover', especially around the lack of reliable mobile phone signal coverage and power outage contingency plans



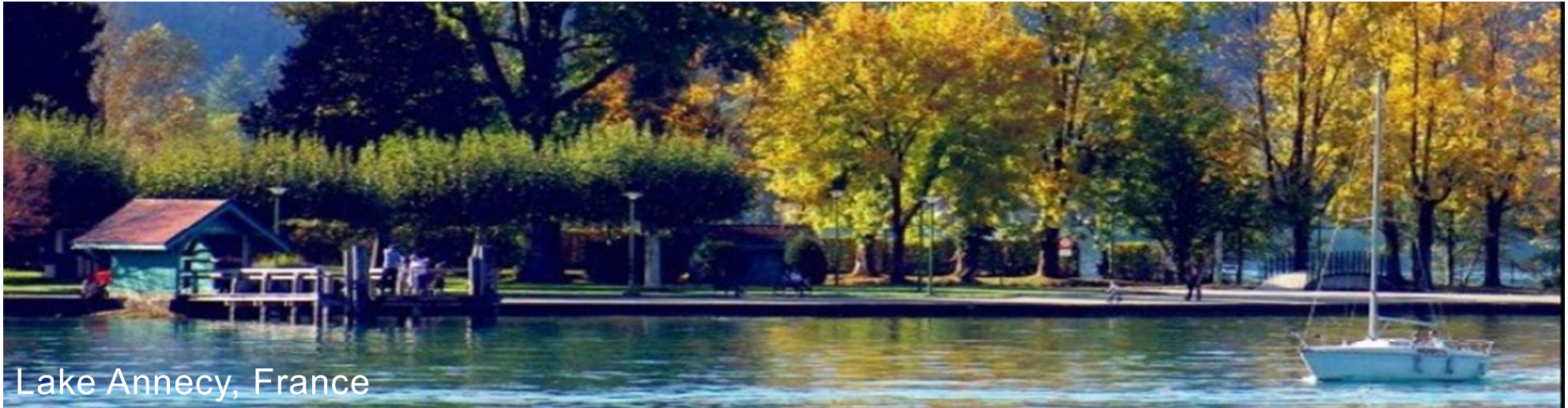
"By working closely together, we have supported many organisations to successfully access this valuable funding and helped communities to become more resilient." *Jenny Benson, Director of Partnerships & Programmes, Cumbria Community Foundation*

Developing Projects



- Over the last year ACT worked closely with village halls through a grant from the Frieda Scott Charitable Trust. Through a tailored package halls were offered a governance review and help to develop environmental plans for their buildings.
- The Victory Hall in Broughton said: “The Frieda Scott Project was great. It came along just as we needed bespoke help to sort out our governance. Now we are looking at improving the hall in terms of efficiency and sustainability through greener options. To have help to look at different ideas and potential costs is going to be invaluable when prioritising projects and looking at funding”.

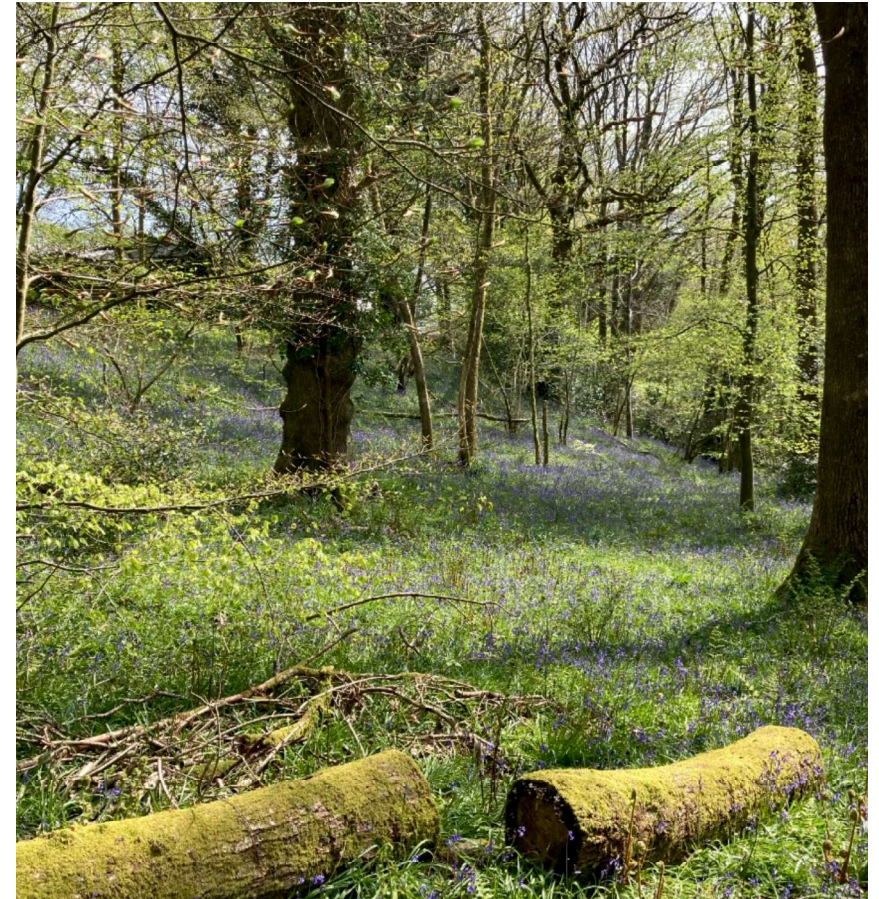
Working with others



- We ran two public events on international case studies of approaches to water quality as part of our work to bring the Love Windermere Partnership into dialogue with community activists
- This year we have laid the ground for a Citizens Panel in Wasdale to explore the question 'How can we get the best from our visitors so that we continue to thrive as a community?' This work puts the community at the heart of decision making, and aims to co-create solutions with landowners and decision makers

Working with others

- Three groups of young people - our next generation of decision makers - have been supported to work with local creatives, to consider what the Lake District National Park Management Plan means to them
- They have produced some amazing work and shown that by allowing the conversation to take place differently it's possible to get meaningful engagement and input from groups who might otherwise not have a voice
- This work challenges LDNPP members to think about how they begin bringing voices together to inform the next five year management plan



We worked with Cumbria Youth Alliance, Cumbria Young Farmers, West Cumbria Rivers Trust, John Ruskin School and 24 young people

Planning for the future



When Colton Parish wanted to refresh their parish plan they needed to capture their communities' aspirations and concerns, but they also wanted to embrace the rich history and landscape of the beautiful parish by trying something a little different. With help from ACT and funding from Esmée, they worked with a storyteller, musician and children from two local schools to explore the valley's history. The children created a manifesto for the area's future, which focussed on protecting the local environment and improving the valley's sustainability.

Marion Brown from the Parish Plan group said "We believe our Parish Plan is an important document. Being able to engage with the community in different and creative ways was a wonderful opportunity that made the hard work of any plan review so much more enjoyable".

Planning for the future



St Bees Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) exemplifies how ACT's core Community Buildings Advice and targeted project support has been combined into a holistic package. A self-led energy survey, building condition survey and governance check gave a sound basis for planning improvements and applying for funding. This was one of ten projects which received capital funding, and support from ACT, through the National Lottery's Community Spaces Partnership Pilot.

"The help provided by ACT to St Bees VHMC was invaluable in enabling us to put together a successful application for over £32k, to help improve insulation, and reduce our carbon footprint and energy bills. With ACT's support we're confident about this and future projects."

Claire Hale, St Bees Village Hall



Hands-on improvements
in St Bees

We Are Here becomes *Everyone Here*



Our Arts Council England funded Creative People and Places programme in West Cumbria *We Are Here!* Got a new look and name this year, becoming *Everyone Here (EH)*

- We engaged local people in a pilot Citizen's Jury with the help of Citizens in Power
- We launched our full *Jury for Joy*, a long-term citizens' jury for West Cumbria on creativity and culture, in April 2024 with 9,000 West Cumbrian households receiving invitations
- 30 people were selected from respondents and the Jury will meet for the first time in May 2024 to shape our future work with West Cumbrians

We Are Here becomes *Everyone Here*



Other projects developed this year include:

- **All Kinds** celebrated Millom as the kindest town in the UK. Creative sessions and a digital map highlighted acts of kindness. This led to *Made in Millom* an event with 600 attendees
- In Dec 2023, 13 artists began **KIND Futures** - with Rosehill Theatre. A year long programme where the artists are currently receiving development training and will go on to work with local community groups
- **West Coast Makers**: We've worked with North Star Co-Design to develop long-term engagement with local young people across West Cumbria to explore the types of creative activities they might like to get involved in



Made in Millom event

ACT Staff and Trustees



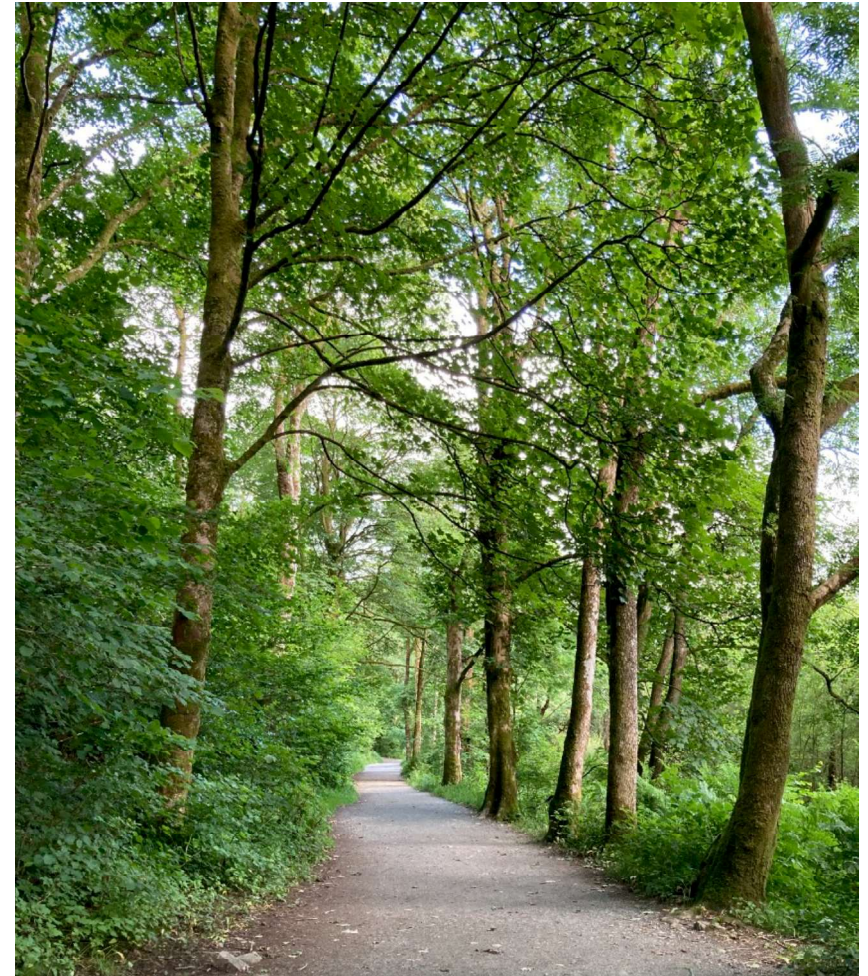
From Top Left:
Lorraine, CEO;
Hellen, Community
Buildings;
Jozi, Wellbeing and
Resilience,
Cumberland;
Carole, Westmorland
and Furness;
Dani, Office Manager;
Fran, Community
Voice & Housing;
Kieran, Everyone
Here;
Sam, Everyone Here

Our Trustees are: Jim Webster (Chair), Alan McViety (Treasurer), Sam Bramwell, Juan Shimmin, Sue Castle-Clarke, Debbie Freake, Charles Ecroyd, Liz Clegg, Nigel Curry

Looking ahead

We will continue to support communities to achieve their plans and aspirations

- In all our work we will follow the ideals outlined in our six principle papers
- Seek the views of rural people on issues that affect them in street and online surveys
- Campaign on sustainable transport, affordable housing, and rural poverty to influences policy and behaviours
- Reduce our carbon footprint with a smaller office and good use of online and hybrid meetings
- Support partners to develop approaches to sustainable food in rural areas



Looking ahead

- Encourage policy makers to implement rural proofing principles in strategy and delivery
- Support and develop community voice with the Collaboration Hub and work in Wasdale,
- Continue our triage service for community buildings enquires and provide quality support towards sustainability
- Support Everyone Here to become an independent entity in West Cumbria
- Continue our learning on Social Value and measuring our impact



The early years of ACT



ACT, Cumbria Council for Social Services as it was then, had its first meeting in the council chamber at Penrith on the 19th of October 1948. The major issue was isolation and loneliness Other issues raised were:

- Access to employment
- Quality and affordability of housing
- Travel to work and school
- Supporting community ventures



1948-1949: Moorland rented its first temporary village hall for £13 per week! We held training for matrons and wardens of old peoples homes

1950s: We ran Chiropody services & hosted The Guild of Lakeland Craftsmen event with 8,260 attendees

1960s: Village Halls were recognised as much more than a building at our 1st village halls conference

1970s: We ran 17 voluntary car schemes & circulated 6,000 info cards on public transport

1980s: We held the Great Rural Education Debate & launched our rural magazine



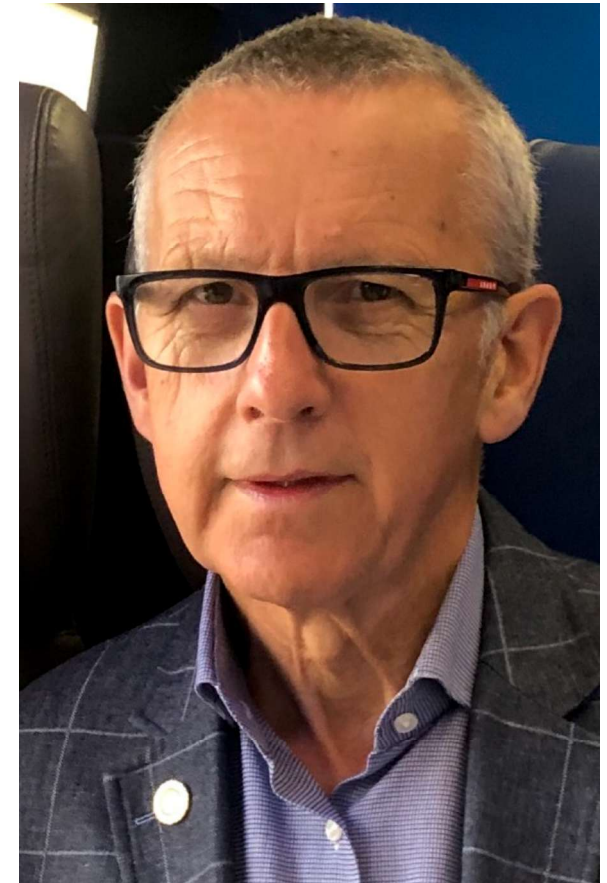
2024: Some of the activities have changed but the needs of rural communities remain very similar

Financial Report

Our Treasurer Alan McViety said:

‘Careful management of our resources and overheads together with improving interest rates has resulted in a surplus of £50,449. We have recently invested some of this in software and IT equipment to assist us in delivering to community groups and other users of our service.

We will continue to invest to secure our long term delivery for rural Cumbria. Our staff are our major resource and we are proud to support them well. We will continue to build capacity to meet needs as they develop in these changing times’.



Alan McViety
ACT Treasurer

Financial Report



Charity Income	2023/2024
DEFRA/ACRE	75,789
National Lottery Community Fund	58,133
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	52,709
National Lottery Community Places Partnership	43,285
Electricity Northwest (through Cumbria Community Foundation)	27,000
Westmorland and Furness Council	21,250
Copeland Community Fund	12,000
Frieda Scott	5,000
Donations	30,940
Other unrestricted	47,486
Arts Council England CPP	420,181
TOTAL	793,773

Charity Costs	2023/2024
Staff costs	272,096
Direct project delivery	258,449
Office, general and IT	39,968
WaH! specific advertising, training & consultancy	23,523
Governance, audit & legal	20,703
Rent and premises	6,624
Membership	6,000
Anniversary celebrations	4,714
Depreciation	4,158
Travel	3,759
TOTAL	639,994



In 2024 ACT has free reserves of £273,468 and will continue to manage our reserves to sustain the long term future of the organisation

Funders



Funders



Support ACT



Becoming a free supporter of ACT will enable us to keep you informed about our work and provide evidence to allow us to keep supporting Cumbrian communities for years to come!



Become an ACT Supporter

**Remember if you support us
- we can better support you!**

ACTION with Communities in Cumbria



Thank you for watching our Annual Review!

Registered in England as:
Voluntary Action Cumbria
Charity No. 1080875
Company No. 3957858



Contact ACT via:
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Design, production and landscape photos by our volunteer designer, Freya Wise