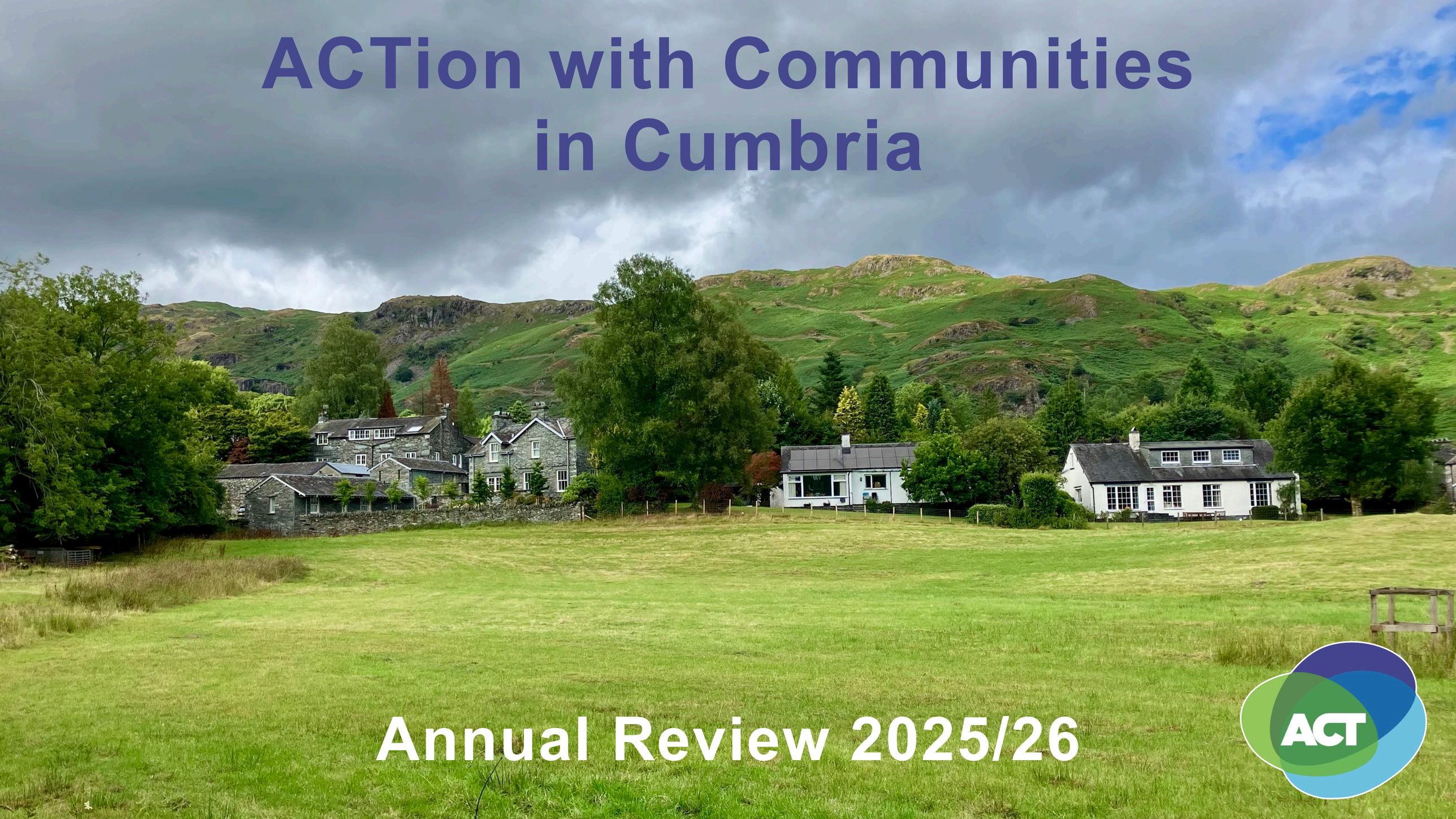
ACTion with Communities in Cumbria



Annual Review 2025/26

Welcome to our 2025/2026 annual review

Our chair, Jim Webster says: ‘I hope you enjoy this select summary of our year and that it inspires you to explore more about ACT on our new website

We have had another busy year, with new permanent staff member Lettie Wareing, joining us in August 2025, and a new trustee: Katherine Jewell from West Cumbria. There’s lots of interesting things to catch up on from our work in the following pages

Some more sober news to share. This year we lost three good ACT friends, Jolyon Dodgson – our recently retired President, and Nigel Curry and Charles Ecroyd, who were Trustees, all passed away. We remember them and their commitment to ACT very fondly



ACT Trustees. R to L: Debbie Freake, Katherine Jewell, Sam Bramwell, Jim Webster, Sue Castle-Clarke & Bex Stamper. Not present: Alan McViety & Juan Shimmim

Let us know if you have any thoughts, ideas, or dreams for your community that we might be able to support you with and please enjoy our annual review’

Thanks to all our trustees, past and present, to our staff team, our small number of very committed volunteers and our funders

ACT's Mission

ACTion with communities in Cumbria

champions community and rural issues

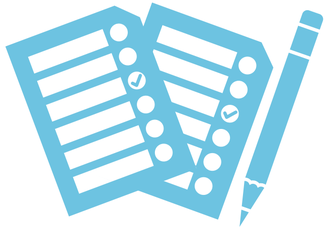


ACT's vision is that no one should be disadvantaged by where they live

The year in numbers



Secured for Cumbrian projects



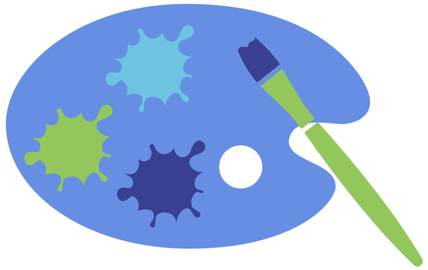
Over 250 people involved in community resilience discussions



377 community building enquiries

10 community led housing surveys





17,142 people involved in creative events and activity in West Cumbria



Over 150 people involved in community transport discussions

Championing community & rural issues

The year in numbers



Championing community & rural issues

Influence policy change

Spatial planning matters! We started talking about this with people in Staveley late in 2023, in response to a resident wanting to know how to approach the Planning Authority to challenge a particular land allocation

- In response, ACT facilitated a series of conversations with interested residents and senior planners at the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA)
- We are working with two illustrators to create visual representations, or ‘posters’ of the key themes from these types of conversation. These can be used in ongoing discussions on planning and other local action
- An event is planned in summer 2026 to share Staveley’s poster with residents and engage with LDNPA Planners on how the local community can best influence Local Plan development and other strategic planning



Read more and see Staveley’s poster in our October newsletter: https://cumbriaaction.org.uk/newsletters/

Influence policy change

- The work in Staveley led to broader conversations in multiple locations with community groups, schools, parish councillors and others about how the Local Plan can shape our places and how communities -who often feel remote from the planning system- can influence the vision for their local areas. Through this work we are encouraging communities to shape rather than respond to strategic planning in the Lake District

- This year we have worked with the London School of Economics, helping them make 10 visits to Warm Spots to talk about people's experiences of care in rural communities

- We drew together the support available for victims of domestic abuse in rural Cumbria to inform a Defra study



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- We have worked with multiple communities on resilience, encouraging people to be prepared and look after each other



Community resilience event

You can read more about the community resilience event at: https://cumbriaaction.org.uk/skelton-toppin-memorial-hall-community-resilience-2025-2026/

Develop and sustain projects

This year's Village Halls Week saw each day draw attention to one of the five NHS steps to wellbeing: Connecting, Being active, Learning, Giving, and Taking notice. Hellen Aitken our community buildings lead said:

'Village halls are more than bricks and mortar, they're spaces where people exercise, socialise, learn and support each other. They enrich lives for all ages, prevent isolation, and ease pressure on local health services. We know when communities are connected people feel happier, healthier and much more engaged. This special week doesn't only highlight the immeasurable positive impact that these venues have on their communities but is also a big thank you to the thousands of volunteers who keep them up and running.'

Develop and sustain projects



Skelton Toppin Memorial Hall committee
with Hellen receiving their certificate at the completion of a project

‘Vic Community Café allows other activities like health walks, Men in Sheds, a pop choir & art group to flourish. A village hall is an essential conduit for socialising, exchanging information & meeting, & there’s nothing like chocolate cake for encouraging a sense of well-being’
Helen Leech, Culgaith Village Hall

‘Village Halls Week is a great way to shine the light on the importance of village halls in providing occasions of fun and laughter and facilities for elderly and disabled members of our community, including resources during our not-uncommon power cuts!’
Wendy Welburn, Newton in Cartmel village hall

‘Bat and chat is table tennis with a strong social element, helping to reduce loneliness by meeting other people… it improves mobility and hand to eye coordination. almost without realising. it as you enjoy the game whilst making sure others also enjoy theirs.’
Chris Horn, Warcop Parish Hall

Find out more about Village Halls Week at: https://cumbriaaction.org.uk/village-halls-week/

Develop and sustain projects

- ACT supports the Community Rail Partnerships (CRP) in Cumbria. Cumbria CRP works with strategic partners and communities to support the use and improvement of local railway stations and services. There are many station adoption groups and creative projects happening at local stations
- ACT supported the Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch AGM in Brampton, where the local MP and attendees focussed on the challenging issue of changing phone lines from analogue to digital. Digital landlines don't work in power cuts making this an important rural resilience issue
- We are working with CNWA and others to share information on this issue and support communities through the change



Find out more about CNWA: www.ourwatch.org.uk/cumbria
and the Community Rail Partnerships: www.communityrailcumbria.co.uk/

Working with others

Community Transport helps residents without a car access key services in nearby towns, including shops and healthcare. It can also provide a way of catching up with friends and making new connections while traveling and reduce strain on local roads and infrastructure by providing alternatives to cars for locals and visitors

- In March 2026, ACT supported Sustainable and Integrated Transport for Ullswater (SITU) with hosting the Cumbria Community Transport Conference
- The conference brought together nearly 100 community transport groups and local organisations from across the county to hear from a range of inspiring speakers, form connections with other groups and engage in workshops and envision the future of community transport
- ACT is supporting a working group established following the conference to promote and represent the needs of community transport groups with the incoming mayor



If you are part of a community transport group, or are interested in establishing one, please get in touch to join these ongoing discussions.

Working with others

- Lorrainne, our CEO chairs the Active Cumbria Partnership. Active Cumbria have been examining their work in rural areas and have encouraged Sport England to think rural in allocating its funding and programmes
- Cumbria has benefited from new investment to support the developmental and place based approaches used by the team. With Lorrainne's help it has also been one of the first Active Partnerships to produce an Environmental Plan
- Copeland Community Fund support ACT to run a programme called Enhancing Communities, where communities identify a project they want to progress, then ACT supports them to plan, deliver, evaluate and consider sustainability as they progress. This program's success means that the National Lottery are considering how it could be rolled out across Cumbria



For more about the Copeland Community Fund see: https://cumbriaaction.org.uk/enhancing-rural-communities-in-copeland-2025-2027/

Planning for the future

In October 2025 we carried out Housing Needs Surveys with all nine parishes of the Alston Moor and Fellside Place Action Group area

- The surveys were hand delivered, by volunteers, to 2,612 homes across the nine parishes. There were 852 responses
- Around 100 households had at least one person who needs to move in the next five years. There was demand for housing both for those setting up their first home and those wishing to downside. There was also some demand for more secure tenure housing and homes physically adapted to people's needs. 80% of respondents would be supportive of a small development of affordable homes for local people in their area
- The findings indicate housing needs and provide evidence to inform local and strategic planning. The Parishes are discussing next steps with Westmorland and Furness Council
- If you think you have a housing need to explore - contact us



Photo Credit: Alston Parish Council Website

You can see the overview report and an example Parish report for Ousby at: https://ousbyparishcouncil.wordpress.com/housing-needs-report/

Planning for the future

- ACT are supporting Cockermouth to create a Community Plan! At their open day over 100 people added comments on local issues and aspirations to art work by Celia Burbush, created with young people from Cockermouth School
- The group are now combining these with many online responses and drafting an Action Plan for consideration by the community and to identify the best partners to progress ideas
- There are another 12 communities in West Cumbria and several more in Westmorland and Furness developing community plans
- A Community Plan allows people to develop a positive view of their community and how it can be improved. It helps them identify what they can do themselves, what they need to work with others to achieve and where they need to advocate for change



For support and examples of Community Led Planning see: https://cumbriaaction.org.uk/community-led-planning/

Everyone Here (EH)

During 2025–26, Everyone Here (EH) - funded by Arts Council England- & hosted by ACT, continued to grow citizen-led creativity across West Cumbria

- We hosted our Imagine Festival in Seascale in May 2025 and developed projects in Mirehouse, Flimby and Frizington towards our next festival in Whitehaven
- We formed the Imagine Choir, created electronic music with young people and developed a dance film with The Knotted Project
- FLOAT celebrated local carnival culture, while Outside In, led by Nanette Madden, explored rest and nature through audiovisual and digital art, live music, storytelling and natural sculpture



The montage shows young people enjoying the Imagine Festival in Seascale

Everyone Here (EH)

- We created seven traineeships in creative producing and production management, building pathways into the local cultural workforce, and became Hope Haven's lead creative partner, embedding creativity within their work
- We developed the CPP's first community-led, arts-based evaluation and worked with our Jury for Joy on digital deliberation
- Our work also led to the formation of Everywhere Everything Everyone CIC, securing £1 million for three years of culture in West Cumbria
- EH became an independent entity in March 2026 and is now separate from ACT. We have enjoyed hosting them, celebrate their great success and wish them well for the future



You can find out more about EH and how to be involved here: https://everyonehere.org/

ACT staff



From left to right: Dani, Lettie, Hellen, Lorrainne, Jozi, Carole, Fran, Kieran and Jamie

Looking ahead

- We will be running a Community Inquiry with residents from Above Derwent, Borrowdale, Buttermere and Keswick Parishes. This work is funded by the National Lottery and is a learning pilot on community voice
- The Inquiry will ask: ‘Is this a good Parish to live and work in, and how could it be better? We will explore how people in rural areas can be meaningfully involved in deliberative democracy
- Another focus this year will be influencing the Mayoral candidates and the new Combined Authority to set rurality as a key future policy area. Housing, transport and poverty are significant issues for rural Cumbrians. Work is needed to adapt policy designed for urban areas to make the best of life and opportunities for the more than 50% of our population living in rural areas



See our community voice page for updates on the Community Inquiry: https://cumbriaaction.org.uk/community-voice/

Looking ahead

- We will have a programme of work with Community buildings, hopefully including more capital works, but most importantly celebrating places where people come together to be friendly, contemplative, active, creative, curious and well
- We will pilot our Wheels to Work project to help rural people and employers address the challenges of getting to work effectively, with reduced car use, more public and community transport, active travel and joint working
- We will continue to work with communities on the issues that matter to them, promote and celebrate their achievements and work to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by where they live



Thanks to all our staff and trustees for their commitment and dedication this year

Financial report

Alan McViety, our treasurer, says:

‘After allowing for the Everyone Here carry forward, which has gone with them into their new organisation, EEE, ACT has made a small surplus of £22,168 this year. ACT is in a sound position, with a sensible reserve

We had a behest this year of £40,000 from our trustee - Nigel Curry, who has sadly passed away. We will invest this to provide support to ACT longer term as he requested. The Flagstone investment of our reserves continues to perform steadily. As ever, our staff are our primary asset. As a board of trustees we plan, so we can look after our staff well, so that they can support communities in Cumbria well

Our reserves reflect our many multiyear projects and funding agreements so that we hold more funds to secure longer term delivery. The security this offers us means we can ensure ongoing support to rural and wider communities and groups. Long term steady management allows us to achieve this’



Alan McViety, our treasurer

Financial report

Charity Income	2025/2026
DEFRA Local Action Grant	51,165
DEFRA Rural Housing Enabling	50,800
National Lottery Community Fund core & social value	65,500
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	60,000
Community Spaces Partnership (National Lottery)	70,325
Westmorland and Furness Council	21,250
Nigel Curry Sustainability Behest	40,000
Copeland Community Fund	10,550
Places to Talk	25,000
Investment income	18,142
Other unrestricted	13,184
Arts Council England CPP EH	369,738
Lottery Community Power & Other	33,000
Donations	30,136
TOTAL	858,790

Charity Costs	2025/2026
Staff costs	355,166
Direct project delivery	439,461
Governance	31,016
Travel	4,435
Membership, training & IT	40,431
Office and general	25,995
TOTAL	896,504
Utilisation of EH restricted funds	59,882
ACT Surplus	22,168

You can find our full accounts through the Charity Commission or supporters can request them from ACT

Funders

COMMUNITY FUND

defra
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

COPELAND COMMUNITY FUND

Esmée Fairbairn FOUNDATION

Westmorland & Furness Council

LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Thank you to all our 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!

Find our supporter form here: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/about/join-us

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria



Thank you for watching our Annual Review!

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

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Design, production and landscape photos by our volunteer designer, Freya Wise