

Community Action Northumberland
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held on Monday 20th November 2023
Bardon Mill & Henshaw Village Hall

Present: Lord Curry of Kirkharle, President in the Chair
Jean Humphrys, Chair of the Board, members and friends of Community Action Northumberland with Mr Andy Dean, Chief Executive Officer, and members of staff. 55 attendees in total.
Apologies were received from 8 attendees.

1. President's Opening Remarks

The President opened the meeting by welcoming all participants to the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

Lord Curry updated the meeting on local, regional and national changes, stating that the Government needs a rural strategy in place. Decarbonisation is a significant issue for rural communities and investment on all fronts tends to focus on larger urban areas. He commented that the North-South divide is still very much in existence and hasn't really changed over the years and that we are now also faced with an Urban-Rural challenge. He highlighted the need for energy advice and support to be available to vulnerable communities and that with the constant changes in Government administration and regional authority it was essential that we have an organisation like CAN.

2. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting and any matters arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

Lord Curry Introduced the Chair, Jean Humphrys to the AGM.

3. Presentation of the 2022-23 Annual Report

The Chair, Jean Humphrys, was delighted to be here presenting the annual report to the AGM. Jean stated how CAN had started the year with a higher level of uncertainty than usual, mainly brought about by changes in the nature and source of grant funding. With short-term funding and funds being allocated differently, the team had to work hard to achieve their targets. There was a great need to push hard with energy advice whilst also supporting those in some of the remotest areas of the County who were off grid. The Rural Community Energy Fund paved the way for planning permission to be sought for community buildings to have solar panels installed. The Warm Hubs toolkit was launched nationally, making it possible for other areas to model CAN's unique approach to supporting communities in difficult times. Village halls, the backbone of communities, were being supported extremely well by CAN, the heritage project proving a great success in bringing communities together. Also, a successful pilot with The National Lottery Community Fund enabling village halls to undertake capital improvement work has resulted in the funders awarding CAN the leadership role, in a cross-county initiative with Durham and Cumbria starting in the 2023 financial year. Jean's concluded by saying this has been a hugely successful year for CAN.

4. Presentation of the 2022-23 Accounts

Adrian Hinchcliffe (Honorary Treasurer) presented the 2022-23 accounts. Slides explained the figures for the year, showing a deficit of £11,868.

Adrian explained, since 2019 the Board chose to allocate any surplus funds to several purposes, including reinvesting in future delivery of projects. These are held in unrestricted/designated funds and the slides indicate the value of these funds in the accounts. Whilst utilising the

restricted funds and apportioning surplus funds, the accounts show healthy reserves, with a purpose of generating further income and activities for CAN. The proportion of funds expended on administration costs remains at 2.2% of funds in 2022-23 with 97.8% going to communities via projects.

Adrian thanked the Board and the Funders.

Lord Curry invited questions regarding the accounts but there were none.

5. Appointment of Honorary Officers

Lord Curry asked all those participating with any of CAN formal business to show their agreement by raising their hand.

The following honorary officers were nominated to act for another year and were duly elected:

- (i) **Patron:** His Grace the Duke of Northumberland
- (ii) **President:** Lord Curry of Kirkharle
- (iii) **Vice Presidents:** Alan Beith, The Venerable Bob Langley, Sally Black, Rev Canon Bob Burston, David Francis and Sheila Walker.
- (iv) **Treasurer:** Adrian Hinchcliffe
- (v) **Auditor:** Robson Laidler

6. Election of the Board

Under CAN's three-year cycle of Board tenure, the following Board members continue until a future AGM: Liz Elliott, Valerie Vaughan, the Venerable Dr Catherine Sourbut-Groves, Jan Ashdown, Stephanie Ellis and Barrie Hensby.

The following existing Board members are at the end of a three-year cycle and were nominated to the Board for a further 3 years: Jean Humphrys

In addition, Norman Hooks was co-opted onto the Board earlier in 2023 was now nominated to the Board for 3 years. Charlotte Wright is also proposed as a new Trustee for 3 years.

John Clark stood down as a trustee.

All board nominations were approved.

7. Some updates from CAN

Andy Dean introduced some of the work CAN is involved in.

- Employability – Bridge Project was very successful and has been replaced by Solid Foundations which is carrying on the success of Bridge.
- Housing – Community-led Housing work, giving support to organisations, has been maintained. A Rural Housing Enabler is being employed by CAN to work closely with the local authority, Parish Councils, Registered Providers, the private sector and others to form innovative partnerships committed to the delivery of rural affordable housing.
- Volunteering Development – CAN is a partner in the delivery of the North of Tyne Volunteering Project, building on existing work with Warm Hubs, Village Halls and Rural Employment Hubs. The project will also support VCSE organisations that involve volunteers to operate volunteering effectively.
- Village Halls – Includes Hallmark, Heritage Project, Digital Inclusion, carbon reduction, energy costs, sustainability and assisting Community Buildings with Community Spaces Partnership.
- Energy & Fuel Poverty – Energy advice, Warm Hubs, slow cooker demonstrations, Domestic Carbon Reduction Project, Northumberland Off-grid Task Force.
- Northumberland Community Energy Ltd – Solar Panel installation - 39 feasibility studies completed, 11 planning permissions obtained, legal support in place, 2 installations commissioned (Coursenside & Longhoughton), funds in place for next 5 installations.

- Rural Voice – Andy explained that CAN's Rural Voice function is reflected in many ways including: nationally via the ACRE network, Defra and the Rural Services Network; locally through CAN e-news, County & Regional Strategy involvement, VONNE, NE & Yorkshire Net Zero Hub, NICRE and the Rural Design Centre.

Andy concluded with three thoughts regarding CAN:

1. Collaboration & partnership are key.
2. Funding diversity is critical.
3. 'We are good at what we do!'

Finally, a short film created by Ofgem was shown, and is available to view, reflecting the tremendous value of CAN's energy advice work and the fantastic impact of Warm Hubs.

A Dean thanked the staff and trustees for their contribution to CAN.

8. Thanks and closure

Lord Curry thanked staff, trustees, and attendees.

Jean Humphrys closed the AGM with thanks to all CAN's supporters, members, staff and trustees, and those that attended this AGM for their ongoing support.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm.