

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Andy and the team listen carefully to local people as they, assess and identify the support needed to achieve the highest priorities for rural Northumberland. CAN's strong reputation, good business acumen and the formation of new partnerships attracted essential funds to continue and extend important work across the region. This has been another year of steady growth giving greater power to local people.

Making good use of support, advice and funds administered by CAN, communities have improved their village halls, acted with confidence on impartial advice about energy options for their homes, charted their history, gained new skills for volunteering and employability, and celebrated the tenth anniversary of Warm Hubs.

The complex and painstaking work of creating Northumberland

Community Energy Ltd (NCEL) a Community Benefit Society, is now complete. CAN provides management support for this unique and innovative project. Members can take advantage of a range of measures, including preferential energy rates, to reduce fuel costs and the carbon footprint of their community buildings. More community groups are joining the forty members of NCEL from across Northumberland.

Giving totally independent advice to rural householders has enhanced CAN's reputation further and has to date provided over 1000 people with the knowledge they need to make informed choices when investing in different sources of energy. The team also provided over 2000 people with resources and advice to make their homes more energy efficient; this significantly exceeded the targets set for this second year of The Energy Advice Project in Rural Northumberland.

'The Village Halls Heritage Project' culminated in the publication of a well-received book that charted the development of 30 Northumberland halls over many decades. The anecdotes, photographs, posters, minutes of meetings and other records painted a fascinating story of rural life. Those who attended the launch of the book were delighted to see how well their stories had been captured and they enjoyed reading about the history of other Northumberland Communities.

As a partner in volunteering development with a North of Tyne area consortium, CAN met or exceeded all targets. Providing training opportunities, social action events, skills sessions and securing volunteering placements for ten people has expanded the reputation and influence of CAN much further afield.

Following on from its success in Northumberland, CAN was awarded the leadership role in a multi-county initiative with Durham and Cumbria to target funding directly to village halls in their communities. This ensured the maximum investment in improvement with efficient and effective administrative controls. Within the first year, funding was allocated to 30 halls across the three counties with work well underway at 26.

The care and sensitivity to maintain employment hubs during an external change to operations and funding was well rewarded when over 130 people engaged with support services across this partnership, and many found jobs or took up further training. Just over half were using their new skills to seek employment.

Overall, this has been another year of strong growth in CAN's support for rural communities.

Jean Humphrys, Chair



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Company No: 7805401 **Charity No:** 1144604

SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

This has been another year of considered growth at CAN, with funding secured from a range of sources and continued gradual expansion of the staff team. CAN is proud of the way in which we have not only sustained but expanded our services and support for Northumberland's rural communities during throughout the significant events of recent years. Highlights include:

- We secured additional funds from the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress scheme to extend our **Energy Advisers** project delivering essential energy support and advice to vulnerable residents across rural Northumberland. Through a partnership with the Energy Saving Trust and Groundwork, we joined the **Home Energy Advice North East** project to complement our existing **Domestic Carbon Reduction** service, advising households across Northumberland on the transition away from fossil fuels.
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- We led a new £1.5 million programme of support, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, with our ACRE Network partners in Durham and Cumbria, providing much needed investment into **village halls and community buildings** across the rural north. The foundation for this partnership is CAN's hugely valued support service, including one-to-one case work, good practice resources, training, funding bid support and achieving the Hallmark accreditation standard.
 - Our **Rural Employment Hub** network continued as a critical element of the countywide voluntary sector employability partnership through the new 'Solid Foundations' project, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. CAN's role within the partnership is to reach out to rural residents to benefit from the wide range of support available principally through six hubs across the rural county each opening one day per week to ensure rural economically inactive residents have access to the support they need.
 - Our **Warm Hubs** project has expanded to even more community venues where people can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment in which to enjoy the company of other people and benefit from energy advice. With funds secured from Northern Gas Networks, we supported organisations around the country to follow our national exemplar Warm Hub model and drew in funds to support hub energy costs. Ofgem produced a short film celebrating the Warm Hub story available on our [website](#).
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- Our direct partnership with the **Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC)** has remained a fundamental element to the way we work. Through a dedicated officer, we have provided advice, training and a wide range of support throughout the year, further consolidating the NALC-CAN relationship into the future.
 - Our enabling hub for community-led housing, **Communities CAN (North East)** has continued to support local communities keen to deliver community-led affordable housing schemes where these are needed in many parts of Northumberland and the wider North East. Our dedicated Coordinator delivers support to groups and organisations across the area, ensuring a strong pipeline of projects is maintained.
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- Working in close partnership with Northumberland County Council, we secured funds made available from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and channelled through the ACRE Network, to help us enable more affordable homes to be delivered in our smaller communities – where they are needed. Our **Rural Housing Enabler (RHE)** project is developing innovative partnerships with Parish Councils, Registered Providers, the private sector and others to increase the pipeline of rural affordable housing schemes in Northumberland and support delivery.
 - In partnership with other local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations in the North of Tyne area, we secured funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and made available by the Combined Authority,

to support **volunteer development** activity. Our role has been to utilise our existing rural networks in Northumberland to maximise the reach of this project into all corners of the region.

- We are a core partner in the establishment of **Northumberland Community Energy Ltd (NCEL)**, a ground-breaking co-operative aiming to enable community buildings across Northumberland to lower carbon emissions, reduce energy costs and enhance community resilience. Funds were secured from a number of sources to enable installation of solar panels and associated battery storage at a diverse range of community buildings. From initial feasibility, the project has gone from strength to strength and aims to achieve installations at 100 venues across the county – a national trail blazer which is summarised in a short film available via our [website](#).
- Through our **Northumberland Off-Grid Task Force**, established by CAN in 2019, we continued to bring together all key partners in endeavouring to find solutions to help those households not connected to the national electricity grid to access the same electricity supply that the rest of the UK takes for granted. This is an issue often forgotten by policy makers and funders. A short film available on our [website](#) highlights the problem.
- We developed two major new initiatives for launch in 2024.
 - The **Rural Digital Inclusion Project** will drive digital inclusion work on the back of investment in Northumberland’s fibre communications network. In partnership with the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE), the project will develop a network of digital champions to support local residents make the most of the digital world.
 - The **CAIRN** programme (Climate Action In the Rural Northeast) will support residents and communities to transition away from fossil fuels, supporting local community energy projects, whole community carbon assessments and energy advice. In partnership with Durham Community Action, NICRE and the Rural Design Centre, and funded through the Climate Action Fund of the National Lottery Community Fund, the programme will enable us to build on existing success and provide a core support service over the next 4 years.
- We maintained our strong participation in the unique and effective **ACRE Network** (Action with Communities in Rural England), focussing on national policy influence, resource acquisition and learning from our rural peers around the country.
- We provided a rural voice for Northumberland through our participation in the ACRE Network and its direct link to DEFRA, work with the Rural Services Network and others at national level, through direct participation in a range of key regional and local networks and programmes, and through our own communications via fortnightly CAN e-news bulletins, website and social media.



For more information about our activities during 2023/24 and our plans for the future, please view our website or contact info@ca-north.org.uk



CAN'S FINANCES

2023-24 saw CAN's income and expenditure continue to grow and the staff team expand, despite the ongoing challenging external circumstances.

Previous years' surplus continues to be invested in further activities whilst securing funds from a wide range of external sources over varying periods to reflect our financial strategy.

Our reserves remain healthy and at the level we need to cover redundancy liabilities which consequentially grow as our staff team expands, and other contingencies. In addition, we have a small project fund available for investment in new activities.

Our key financial relationships with both Defra and NALC have been maintained. Each year a number of funded programmes come to an end, but we continue to diversify our other income with a combination of grant, contract, consultancy and directly earned income representing the continuing strength of our relationships with funders and partners, maintaining robust foundations for subsequent financial years.

In the face of continuing challenges faced by our communities, sincere thanks must go to all our funders for their continued support throughout the year together with our committed and passionate staff and trustees, our members and supporters, all of whom are listed below.

Income and Expenditure Account (year ended 31 March 2024)

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Voluntary Income		Raising Funds	
Donations & legacies	3,395	Cost of generating income	4,775
Other trading activities	4,079		
Investments	3,481		
Grant Income		Charitable Activities	
DEFRA	43,305	Salaries, NI, pension	168,716
Community Foundation	15,000	Project direct costs	691,375
National Lottery Community Fund	272,993	Support costs	5,344
Energy Projects	157,337		
Community Buildings Officer	3,058		
BBO Project	8,697		
Community Housing Fund	36,471		
Energy Redress	122,645	Governance Costs	
UKSPF	95,976	Salaries, NI, pension	8,290
North of Tyne Combined Authority	26,600	Administration	2,421
Rural Housing Enabler (ACRE)	25,750	Independent examination	1,272
Other	25,471		
Other Income			
NALC	30,000		
Prudhoe Partnership	12,500		
Wingates	3,659		
OilCAN	2,887		
TOTAL INCOME	893,304	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	882,193
		SURPLUS FOR YEAR	11,111

Patron His Grace the Duke of Northumberland

President Lord Curry of Kirkharle CBE

Vice Presidents

Rt Hon Lord Alan Beith; Mrs S E Black MBE; Rev Canon B Burston; Ven R Langley; Mrs S Walker; Dr D Francis

Honorary Treasurer Adrian Hinchcliffe

Board of Directors 2023-24

Jean Humphrys (Chair)
Jan Ashdown (Vice Chair)
Elizabeth Elliott
Valerie Vaughan
Barrie Hensby

Ven Catherine Sourbut-Groves
Stephanie Ellis
Norman Hooks from 11.09.23
Charlotte Wright from 20.11.23

Staff 2023-24

Caroline Armstrong – WH Coordinator (support)
Louise Currie – Community Initiatives Officer
Andy Dean – Chief Executive Officer
Liz Gray – Energy Adviser
Tracey Morgan – Community Development Officer
Julia Plinston – Community Development Officer
Anna Revell – Energy Adviser
Margaret Tweddell – Finance & Admin Assistant
Vince Walsh – Rural Housing Enabler

Andrew Beresford – Energy Adviser/Asst DCRO
Carol Davison – Finance & Admin Officer
Alan Gerono – Development Officer
Tom Johnston – Communities CAN Coordinator
Christine Nicholls – Community Development Officer
Graeme Popay – NALC Chief Officer
Leanne Shipley – Warm Hubs Coord/Asst DRCO
Brian Watson – Domestic Carbon Reduction Officer

Marketing Consultant: Carrie Brookes

Work Coaches: Caroline Armstrong, Michelle Awburn, Lisa Douglas, Sarah Sunderland, Tracey Hinton

Members and Supporters 2023-24

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)	Cresswell Village Hall
AF Affinity Ltd	Crookham Village Hall
Age UK Northumberland	Lord Curry
Allenheads Trust Ltd	Dalton Village Hall
Alnwick Town Council	Dept of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
Amble Town Council	Diocese of Newcastle
Ancroft Memorial Hall	His Grace the Duke of Northumberland
The Ballinger Trust	Durham County Council
Beadnell Womens Institute	Ellington Social Welfare Centre
Rt Hon Lord Beith	Ellington Village Hall
Birtley Village Hall	The Energy Savings Trust
S E Black MBE	FoNDT
Bowsden Village Hall	Forestry Commission
The Breamish Hall Powburn	D Francis
B Burston	R Freeman
Citizens Advice Northumberland	Gateshead Council
Capheaton Parish Council	M Gibbs
Choppington Parish Council	R Gibbs
CLA North	Gilsland Village Hall
Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation	Mr A Gooding
Colwell Village Hall	Great Whittington Village Hall Committee
Communities CAN (North East) Ltd	Haltwhistle Partnership Ltd
Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland	T Hawkins
Cornhill Village Hall	Haydon Parish Council
Country Land & Business Association North	Healthwatch
Mr G Courtice	The Hearth Centre (Horsley) Ltd
Craster Community Trust	Mr G Hepburn OBE
	Hedley on the Hill Parish Council

<p>High Forest Community Association Hindmarsh Village Hall Horsley WI/Village Hall Howick Village Hall Trust Inspired Energy Impact research W D Johnson The Joicey Trust Jubilee Hall, Newton on the Moor The Jubilee Institute, Rothbury Just Giving Kirknewton Village Hall Trust Kirkwhelpington Memorial Hall Knarsdale with Kirkhaugh Community Hall Sir James Knott Trust B Langley Langley Village Hall Lesbury Village Hall J F Lewis Longhoughton Community & Sports Centre Trust A Lowrie LSI Energy C G Matthews-Maxwell Merton Hall Recreation Centre Middleton & Todridge Village Hall Mr M Middleton G E Miller Mind Active D Morgan N Mundy National CAB National Energy Action National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise The National Lottery Community Fund The National Lottery Heritage Fund Netherwitton Village Hall Netherton War Memorial Hall Newbrough Parish Council Newcastle City Council Newcastle University NICRE North of Tyne Combined Authority Northern Gas Networks Northern Powergrid North Northumberland Village Hall Consortium Northumberland Assoc of Local Councils Northumberland Community Energy Ltd Northumberland County Council</p>	<p>Northumberland CVA Northumberland Estates Northumberland Federation of Women's Institutes Association of Northumberland Local History Societies Northumbria Youth OilCAN Members Otterburn Memorial Hall Ovingham Reading Room Ponteland Memorial Hall R Poppleton Prudhoe Community Partnership Rennington Village Hall S Richardson The Rothley Trust Rural Churches for everyone The Rural Design Centre K Rushworth Shilbottle Community Hall Slaley Commemoration Hall South Charlton Village Hall Stannington Village Hall Stamfordham Village Hall Stocksfield Community Association H Talbot Tarsset Village Hall Thropton War Memorial Hall Thriving Together - Multiply Tees Valley Combined Authority Transition Tynedale UK Shared Prosperity Fund Ulgham WI United Reformed Church Upper Coquetdale Community Transport V Vaughan Ventient Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) Wall Village Hall S Walker Wark Mechanics Institute & Town Hall West Northumberland Community Buildings Consortium Whalton Village Hall Whittingham Memorial Institute Wingates Windfarm Community Fund Workers' Educational Association Wylam Institute Community Association</p>
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