

CUMBRIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Annual Report

**NOVEMBER
2010**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As Chairman I have the opportunity of observing the day-to-day running of our CALC office in Penrith. During the past year, two events have caused me to look more closely at its effectiveness. The first was the publication of the NALC Draft Strategy and Business Plan and the second was the retirement of Guy Richardson. Whilst reading the NALC plan it became apparent how fortunate we are as Cumbrians to belong to such a professional and financially accountable association that achieves so much for its members. This has been in part due to the outstanding job that Guy has done over the past ten years as Chief Officer.

In 2001 only 49% of Cumbrian parish councils had adopted standing orders; the figure is now 98%. All CALC members have now adopted a code of conduct and the vast majority of councils have also adopted financial regulations. There has been a dramatic transformation in the role of the clerk; most now have written job descriptions and even contracts of employment. The very successful training programme for both clerks and councillors continues to provide vital professional guidance under Chris Bagshaw's expert supervision. Meanwhile on a daily basis Guy achieved a very productive working relationship with a wide cross-section of member parishes, as the voice at the end of the phone offering superb professional advice. I'm sure all members will join me in wishing both Guy and his wife Val every happiness in his well deserved retirement.

It is heartening to read in the body of this Annual Report how much of the work started by Guy is continuing with the excellent and hard-working team that he has left in place. David Claxton seems to have hit the ground running and is addressing the current major issues that CALC needs to be involved with such as Community Empowerment and the new Localism Bill, at the same time as supporting parishes on a daily basis.

This year has been a period of transition for many parish councils as we look at 'Localism' and effective joint working with the principal authorities, particularly following the major predicted financial cuts. We need to make our voices heard and not allow the phrases 'bottom-up approach' or 'grass roots level' to become hollow jargon. The 'Big Society' is doing what so many of you do so well - keep up the good work!

Finally my thanks in particular to all of the hard-working CALC staff, all of whom are 'supposed' to be part-time, also to the District Chairmen, their Committees and the Executive, many of whom put in long and much appreciated hours

Jocelyn Holland
Chairman

ACTIVITIES 2009/2010

TRAINING PROGRAMME

Over the past year efforts have continued to reduce the financial subsidy required to deliver the regular, mainstream training programme for councillors and clerks. New financial incentives to boost attendances were introduced and other changes to course content and venues were made. A total of 24 events were delivered with 192 attendances. In addition 9 'CALC Selectives' events were delivered. These events allow a council to make its own selection of course content, date and venue.

External sources of funding boosted our training activities by supporting some new events. The Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CIEP) provided a grant to CALC to run a series of events entitled "How Parish Councils Can Win Friends and Influence People". This was part of a wider CIEP programme to develop influence and capacity within communities. These courses were designed and delivered by an external consultant and were well received.

CALC was also awarded a contract by the Friends of the Lake District (FoLD) to deliver training to parish councils on Open Space Protection. This was part of a larger FoLD project, funded by the Big Lottery. This well received training for parish councils covered the law and good practice in managing Village Greens and other important open spaces in communities.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

During the course of the year CALC has continued to work with Principal Authorities and local councils on the 'community empowerment' agenda pursued by the previous Government. Since the General Election in May this has been reshaped and rebranded as the "Big Society" by the new coalition Government and the Eden area has been selected as one of four national vanguard areas. Members of the CALC Executive Committee met with Penrith and the Border MP, Rory Stewart, who is Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Local Democracy to encourage a central role for local councils in the emerging Big Society agenda.

The CALC approach to this subject was set out in the document "Greater Influence for Local Councils – A Call for Action" which was adopted in May 2008 and remains the Association's approach. This sets out the key actions that need to be taken to enable local councils to achieve more influence – three tier community partnership working; selective devolution; improved dialogue, consultation and engagement; and culture change within the Principal Authorities.

The CALC role has been to work with Principal Authorities in developing their ideas on how to take community empowerment forward. Although progress is fairly slow, there are now arrangements in place or emerging in all Districts. As local councils themselves have

become directly involved in partnerships with the Principal Authorities and others, CALC has gradually stood back.

PARISH CHARTERS

Part of the community empowerment agenda is to ensure that the three tier working agreements set down in the Parish Charters actually work. The Charters set down agreements between the County Council, the District Councils, the LDNPA and local councils on such matters as liaison, consultation and joint working. They are intended to be the framework within which the three tiers of local government in Cumbria will work together.

Over the last year concern arose that the monitoring of the Charters was not sufficiently rigorous and, as a consequence, their effectiveness was being diminished. Therefore a comprehensive survey was undertaken of local council and Principal Authority views on which commitments in the Charters were being met and which were not. The results and the lessons learnt are still being considered and will ultimately lead to some revised working arrangements and a review of all the Charters during 2011.

REPRESENTING LOCAL COUNCILS

It is an important role of CALC to provide the local council view on major issues affecting all or parts of Cumbria. During the year members of the Executive Committee and the five District Associations represented local councils' interests on many regional, county and local committees on such topics as housing, transport, planning, education, policing, rights of way etc.

Particularly significant was the invitation CALC received to represent the interests of local councils in the new governance arrangements of the Cumbria Strategic Partnership - the new Cumbria Leaders' Board, where the Chairman of CALC has a seat, and the Cumbria Chief Executives Group, where the CALC Chief Officer has a seat.

In addition, Principal Authorities are increasingly requesting CALC to find local council representatives to attend their committees – notably Standards Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the County Council's Local Committees. This is a very welcome trend. The time and effort CALC/local council representatives put in is very much appreciated.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

During the year energy development and climate change have emerged in various guises as issues for local councils and CALC. There has been a sharp rise in enquires coming into the CALC office about how to resist certain energy projects, such as wind turbines, and how to encourage others, such as small hydro schemes, as well as major issues about the future of the nuclear industry and radioactive waste disposal.

In June CALC arranged a presentation by Sir Martin Holdgate on his report on 'The Scope for Renewable Energy in Cumbria'. This well received presentation appears to have stirred local councils' interest in the possibilities in their areas. CALC has promoted national guidance on the opportunities for local councils to take action locally on combating climate

change. The Eden Association of Local Councils arranged a conference in May on Community Owned Renewable Energy Schemes and a number of CALC Associations received a presentation from the County Council's Climate Change Officer. In Allerdale, where the proposals for wind turbine construction appear to be particularly numerous, the CALC Allerdale Association arranged a presentation by local planners to help local councils understand the local planning policies on wind energy.

On nuclear energy, the Association arranged a special meeting for Copeland parishes to discuss the Government's draft policy and proposals for three new nuclear power stations in West Cumbria. CALC made a submission to Government in support of local councils' views. CALC continued to represent local councils on the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership and circulated a number of information bulletins to member councils during the year.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

All councils that subscribe to CALC also receive membership of our national association – the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). NALC represents the interests of local councils at the national level and continues to be very active in influencing Government thinking about community empowerment and other issues of direct interest to local councils.

During the year NALC issued a consultation on a new Strategy and Business Plan for the Association. This generated quite a lot of discussion nationally, including within CALC's Executive Committee which submitted formal views.

NALC continues to be the Association's primary source of information and advice on legal matters affecting local councils. During the course of the year NALC issued a new Employers' Guide; revised model Standing Orders and related guidance on council administration; a Communications Toolkit and a revised manual on accounts and audit. This Association contributes to the policies and priorities of NALC through our representative on NALC Council, Keith Morgan. NALC's Annual Report can be found on the CALC website.

REGIONAL MATTERS

The Association continued to participate in the work of the NW Federation of Town and Parish Councils, which shares best practice among the county associations and raises the profile of local councils in the minds the Government Office and other regional agencies.

ADVICE TO COUNCILS

One of the main tasks of CALC is to provide advice to its members on procedural, financial and legal matters. This is a major area of activity that takes up a large amount of CALC staff time. Advice has been sought on a wide range of topics during the past year, particularly on allotments provision, employment matters, planning issues and council procedures.

It is in this area of service that CALC's membership of the National Association of Local Councils is very useful, particularly for legal advice and guidance which can be passed on to our members.

INFORMATION SERVICES

Many of the NALC and CALC publications, leaflets and posters that used to be sent out in the post from the CALC office are now available on the Association's website. As a consequence there are now relatively few requests for information to be posted.

The CALC Circular, which was issued ten times during the year, continued to be one of the Association's main means of communication with its membership. A significant number of individuals in partner organisations are now also on the circulation list.

Information about local councils is regularly requested by members of the public, probably arising from knowledge of the Association's existence through the website.

MEMBERSHIP

There are 223 Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings in membership from 267 parishes in the county. Of the 232 Town and Parish Councils in the county, 216 (90%) are in membership. We now have the position that 98% of the electors living in the parished areas of Cumbria are served by a CALC member council or meeting.

DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS

The CALC District Associations for Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland have continued to meet regularly; generally four times during the year. The agendas over the last year have been particularly crowded with many important topics discussed.

All the Associations have discussed locality working in one way or another. The Carlisle Association has taken the initiative in developing issue based locality working which has received favourable initial responses from the County and City Councils. In South Lakeland the new Local Area Partnerships were a regular topic for discussion, as were the pilot schemes in Copeland. Other topics discussed at several Associations were the new Choice Based Letting Scheme, Highways Stewards, wind energy developments and land registration. The Eden Association was the first Association to receive a presentation on the new 'Better Highways' scheme for highways maintenance. The other Associations will receive presentations during 2010/11.

Meetings of the parish councils and meetings in the Lake District National Park, convened by CALC, have now become well established. These meetings focus on topical issues and consider the activities of the World Heritage Site Steering Group and the Lake District National Park Partnership.

STAFF CHANGES



Guy Richardson retired as Chief Officer after 11 years in the post and was replaced by David Claxton who until recently worked for Cumbria County Council. Chris Bagshaw's post was redesignated Assistant Chief Officer. Guy Richardson and Chris Shaw have taken on part time contracts to support the Association's participation in the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership.

CALC OFFICERS

(2009 - 2010)

President: Mr M Redgers, O.B.E., J.P.

Vice Presidents: Miss Jo Clarke
Mr S Simpson

Chairman: Cllr Ms J Holland

Hon. Treasurer: Mr D Johnson

Allerdale District Chairman: Cllr V de Quincey

Carlisle District Chairman: Cllr R Auld

Copeland District Chairman: Cllr K Hitchen

Eden District Chairman: Cllr W Collinge

South Lakeland District Chairman: Cllr A Rothwell

CALC STAFF

Chief Officer Guy Richardson

Parish Development Officer Chris Bagshaw

Parish Liaison Officer
(Carlisle/Eden) Gwen Dumbleton

Parish Liaison Officer
(South Lakeland/Barrow) Amanda McCleery

Parish Liaison Officer
(Allerdale/Copeland) Chris Shaw

(All CALC staff are employed part-time)

Executive Committee **(2009 - 2010)**

Chairman: Cllr Ms J Holland

M Redgers, OBE, JP
Miss Jo Clarke
Mr S Simpson
Mr D Johnson

President
Vice President
Vice President
Hon Treasurer

Cllr B Wilson
Cllr V de Quincey
Cllr R Auld
Cllr Ms J Holland
Cllr K Hitchen
Mr D Polhill
Cllr W Collinge
Cllr K Morgan
Cllr A Rothwell
Mrs C Hayton

Dearham PC
Bothel and Threapland PC
Dalston PC
Wetheral PC
Drigg and Carleton PC
Gosforth PC
Ainstable PC
Appleby TC
Kendal TC
Holme PC

Cllr Mrs J Hay
Cllr Mrs P Dalton
Cllr G Wilson
Cllr L Johnson

Culgaith PC
Dalston PC
Lazonby PC
Lakes PC

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2010

	2010	2009
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Affiliation fees	43,586	32,124
Sale of Publications	95	206
Sale of Local Council Review	1,086	915
Parish Development Programme	-	53,743
Local Authority Grants	29,952	-
Social and Community Programme	-	9,366
Training	5,357	6,467
AGM	460	460
Deposit Account Interest	29	847
Open Space Protection Training	680	-
Managing Radioactive Waste Safely	12,326	-
Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership	6,700	-
	<u>100,271</u>	<u>104,128</u>
Balances at 1 st April 2009		
Deposit Account	50,427	46,586
Current Account	<u>11,378</u>	<u>15,407</u>
	<u>61,805</u>	<u>61,993</u>
	<u>162,076</u>	<u>166,121</u>
PAYMENTS		
NALC - Affiliation Fees	12,750	11,797
Publications	300	123
NALC Local Council Review	1,031	1,117
Printing & Stationery	818	1,262
Postage and Telephone	933	876
Travel & Subsistence	3,501	3,926
Meetings	1,846	3,184
Advertising	2,009	-
Bank Charges	66	67
Salaries and expenses	67,962	28,009
Parish Development Programme	-	30,279
Social and Community Programme	-	12,790
Accountancy Fees	679	1,360
Honoraria	500	500
Training	6,527	8,268
Sundries	313	10
Insurance	784	748
Open Space Protection Training	448	-
Managing Radioactive Waste Safely	1,032	-
Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Programme	4,763	-
	<u>106,262</u>	<u>104,316</u>
Balances at 31 st March 2010		
Deposit Account	51,956	50,427
Current Account	<u>3,858</u>	<u>11,378</u>
	<u>55,814</u>	<u>61,805</u>
	<u>162,076</u>	<u>166,121</u>

We certify that the above Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2010 is correct and in accordance with the best of our information given to us and as shown by the books.

Saint & Co, Chartered Accountants, Unit 3, Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth CA13 0QT.

CALC OFFICE

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