

Annual Report

Cumbria Association of Local Councils

2011



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Chairman's Report 2011

Cllr Jocelyn Holland rounds up her year at the helm.

Over the past year we have all been bombarded with the talk of 'The Big Society' and how Parish Councils should be a part of it. In reality 'The Big Society' is 'The Good Society', a concept which has been embraced by Parish Councils here in Cumbria for decades. This Annual Report summarises much of the excellent work carried out by CALC and its members for all of the communities that they represent.

During the past year the CALC officers have achieved a tremendous amount not only by being the voice at the end of the phone, answering questions and giving advice but also in the production of the invaluable CALC Circular. Improvements in electronic communication over the past few years have dramatically reduced the postal and administrative costs in the office with most publications, leaflets and posters being available on the CALC website. However during the past four years CALC officers have grown to rely on the staggeringly efficient Tracey Moran, a County Council officer who has worked in the Penrith office. Her hard work has been much appreciated and CALC was very sorry to say goodbye to her this summer. We wish her well on her maternity leave.

Just over a year ago Guy Richardson formally retired as Chief Executive of CALC, but agreed to stay on to work with Chris



Cllr Jocelyn Holland, Wetheral PC.

Shaw on the MRWS consultation. It is fortunate that CALC are not paying either of their salaries as they have both worked very long hours representing Parish Councils on the MRWS partnership. They have insisted that the views of local communities with relation to the siting process are clearly included in the consultation document. We have been extremely fortunate to have Guy with his background experience and expertise working on CALC's behalf.

During the past year David Claxton has introduced a number of innovations such as the 'Meet CALC' sessions which have been well attended, in particular by Parish Clerks who are often not able to attend evening meetings. He has also organised most efficiently a number of events on the Big Society and Broadband. Chris Bagshaw has worked with his customary good hu-

mour on the Training Programme, increasing the numbers of venues, topics and attendees whilst managing to break even. Many of us look forward to his Friday afternoon missives, which always bring a smile at the end of the week.

CALC has taken a proactive role with Broadband, working closely with the County Council we have been led by Ronnie Auld who sits on the Accessible Cumbria Partnership Board. Ronnie's professional knowledge, enthusiasm and boundless energy have brought together Parish Broadband Champions and Key Stakeholders across the County all united in their aim to find viable ways of introducing high speed broad across the whole county.

The close working relationship with the County also includes CALC representation on the Cumbria Leadership Board.

District associations and their officers have also worked closely with District Councils sending representatives to an increasing number of meetings.

Whilst a tremendous amount has been achieved during the past year by CALC and its members we cannot afford to be complacent. When considering how to implement the recommendations of the forthcoming Localism Bill Parish Councils need to look, particularly, at the sustainability of their communities, we need to be dynamic and forward thinking, considering in particular the changing demographic structure of Cumbria and how it will relate to both the economy and future housing needs. Above all we need to make our voices heard and to continue the work of 'The Good Society'.

Big Society at the CALC Localism Conference



CALC Activities in 2010–2011

The Localism Bill and the Big Society

The Localism Bill was introduced to Parliament in December 2010, and aims to give a framework and structure for the Coalition Government's ambition, in its own words, 'to shift ... power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils.' The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has been lobbying to ensure that the Bill promotes the interests of local councils, and that when enacted the Bill will give local councils a real opportunity to help make a difference in their communities.

At the time of writing, the Bill is in the House of Lords and is expected to have completed all its stages and to become law early in 2012. As is often the case the Bill leaves a lot of the detail to be filled in by statutory regulations and guidance so it may be a little longer until we are absolutely clear how some of the new provisions, like the various community rights to build, buy and challenge, will operate in practice. The General Power of Competence, which will enable local councils that meet certain criteria to do anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited, will be particularly welcome and a real step forward. It will free councils of the constraints imposed by the current requirement that all their actions must be justified by a specific enabling power, or be



Tea and CALC at Lanercost Abbey

restricted by the spending cap imposed by section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act. CALC plans to hold a workshop early next year so that local councils have further information about the Act and the challenges and opportunities that it will bring.

Over the course of the year the 'Big Society' has been the subject of a great many papers, conferences and seminars, examining what the term means, what impact it can make and what needs to be done to turn words and aspirations into real, practical achievements on the ground. While this debate has been taking place at the national level, local councils across Cumbria have been quietly getting on doing the things that local communities have agreed need to be done, through a community planning process in most cases, to improve the social, economic and environmental well being of people in villages and towns up and down the county. The three

vanguards in Eden district have been at the forefront of national attention and much has already been achieved. But we should not forget that local councils generally, working on their own or with others, have also achieved a great deal in Cumbria in the spirit of 'Big Society'.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Coalition Government has been keen to test how certain of the provisions in the Localism Bill will work in practice, and to this end has approved a number of frontrunners to pilot work on neighbourhood planning. These are being run across the country and it is pleasing that a number are taking place in Cumbria in association with the relevant local planning authority, eg Upper Eden, Coniston and Torver and Cockermouth. South Lakeland District Council is also keen to work with a parish or group of parishes on a similar project.

All of this work will be helpful in informing local councils in Cumbria generally of the benefits of neighbourhood planning, how the process can work and what the potential pitfalls are.

Community Empowerment

Last year we obtained funding through the Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CEIP) to conduct a survey of the 24 local councils serving the key serv-

ice centres in Cumbria. Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) undertook an interview survey with these councils to obtain up to date information about the services and projects councils are delivering currently and their aspirations for the future, including any interest they might have in taking on or sharing the delivery of services with principal authorities. In addition, because South Lakeland District Council specifically requested it, ACT also undertook a postal survey of all parishes in that district.

The survey results have provided us with essential information to be used in discussions with principal authorities about the future role of the larger town and parish councils in the county. This is especially important in the context of the proposals in the Localism Bill for local councils to be given the opportunity to take on responsibility for a broader range of local services, and the ideas in the Open Public Services White Paper published in July 2011.

While we welcome discussions with principal authorities we also have to ensure that thinking within principal authorities is realistic. The survey provides a framework within which general discussions about a devolution framework can take place for local councils that want to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Some may not wish to take on a greater service delivery role.

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 were 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.

While the aims of the parish charters are no less relevant today than when they were drawn up there has been a great deal of concern, evidenced in our 2010 survey, that the effectiveness of the charters has diminished over time. We have taken the view therefore that we should work with the other tiers of local government to refresh the charters so that they better reflect the circumstances and context in which we now work. We have put together therefore, in draft form, a shorter and more focussed document, which will establish a shared purpose and a set of shared principles together with a short list of agreed expectations between the different local government tiers.

We plan to discuss the draft framework for the new charters through district association meetings over the next six to nine months so that we can take local council views into account before new documents are agreed.

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 county and local committees on such topics as housing, transport, planning, education, policing and rights of way.

CALC continues to represent the interests of local councils on the Cumbria Leaders' Board, where the Chairman of CALC has a seat, and the Cumbria Chief Executives Group, where CALC's Chief Officer has a seat. A main topic this year has been how the principal authorities can meet tight public spending targets with the least damage to frontline services.

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.

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership

Over the past year CALC has been heavily involved in the work of the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership representing the views of local councils, particularly in the Allerdale and Copeland districts, on what is a very important national as well as local issue. The County Council and the Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils previously expressed an interest in considering whether or not a nuclear repository should be sited in West Cumbria for the underground disposal of higher activity radioactive waste. The

MRWS Partnership has been considering a wide range of questions relating to this issue such as the suitability of the geology in West Cumbria for such a facility, safety considerations, the extent of public support and how, if the proposal moved to the next exploratory stage, a decision would be taken about where any facility should be sited.

The decision as to whether or not to proceed to the next stage will be taken by the County Council and the Copeland Borough Council in respect of Copeland and the County Council and the Allerdale Borough Council in respect of Allerdale. Such a decision will be informed by a range of relevant information including the extent of public support for progressing

to the next stage of identifying potentially suitable sites. Support will be measured in a number of ways including through surveys and the responses to a wide ranging public consultation which will be conducted later this year and into early 2012.

An area that has particularly concerned CALC relates to the process for searching for a site. Our clear view, reached through consultation with Allerdale and Copeland local councils, is that the public consultation document must make clear that the willingness of local communities to participate in the siting process must be given before the principal local authorities decide to proceed to the next stage. This matter is still the subject of discussion within the Partnership.

Tea and CALC in Glenridding



Connecting Cumbria – superfast broadband

This year has seen the start of this major project, being managed by Cumbria County Council, to bring superfast broadband to Cumbria. Funding has already been secured through Broadband Delivery UK (£17m) to help bring broadband to the rural areas of Cumbria that are unlikely to be served by a commercial provider and other funding sources to add to this pot are being actively pursued.

This is a major project which is of great importance to individuals and to the future economic prosperity of Cumbria as well as to the way in which public services are delivered in the future. CALC has a place on the Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board which brings together the key stakeholders in the project, and we are working with hub co-ordinators and parish broadband champions to try to ensure that no area of the County loses out.

The County Council will award a contract in December for the public sector infrastructure, and after that the project timetable and programme for connecting communities over the life of the project, 2012–2015, will begin to become clearer. CALC will be working with the hub co-ordinators group and others to put in place a Community Engagement Strategy which will set out what the project is seeking to achieve and how people in local communities can play a part in making sure that it is a success.

Training Programme

Developing Your Skills is the name given to CALC's training and development programme for clerks, parish council staff and

councillors. 2010–11 was another successful year with over 200 individual bookings on courses. Topics covered included Local Council Finance, Freedom of Information, Chairmanship skills, and book-keeping methods as well as more generalised introductions to the role of a clerk and the role of a councillor. CALC's lead trainers are Jean Airey and Clive Moth, both experienced local council clerks and trainers. A special initiative in 2010 saw CALC team up with the Heritage Lottery-funded Our Green Space project to deliver comprehensive training and awareness sessions on the various legal protections for open spaces, village greens and common land. CALC charges very competitive rates for training and development sessions, any surplus raised being used to cross-subsidise other courses and keeping the fee down. The aim is to maintain cost-neutrality to the association, whilst ensuring that sessions are available in a variety of locations and times to suit councillors and clerks.

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

All councils that subscribe to CALC automatically become members 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 the Localism Bill, community empowerment and other issues of direct interest to local councils.

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 is-

sued a new Good Councillors Guide (3rd Edition); revised model Standing Orders and related guidance on council administration; a guide on Affordable Rural Housing and a refreshed National Training Strategy.

We contribute 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.

During the year CALC's Executive Committee submitted three policy motions to NALC for consideration. These concerned: making the law on the payment of carers' allowances to councillors consistent between local councils and

principal authorities, which NALC has adopted as national policy; making the case for public toilets managed by local councils or community groups to be exempt from non domestic rates, which NALC has raised again with Government; and, most recently, asking NALC to make representations for a change in the law covering parish election procedures, which will be considered in November 2011.

Regional Matters

The Association continued to participate in the work of the North West Federation of Town and Parish Councils, which shares best practice among the four county asso-



Allotments in Kendal provided for the community by Kendal Town Council

ciations in North West England, and raises the profile of local councils across district, county and regional boundaries.

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 employment matters, including HMRC's decision to require all councils to register as employers and for PAYE, planning issues, and council and election 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 is issued ten times a year, continues to be one of our

main means of communication with our members. 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. As a membership association we are careful to provide general rather than council specific information and guidance.

A new development this year, which we aim to continue, has been our informal 'Meet CALC' sessions where we invite councils in an area to come together informally to meet CALC staff to discuss matters of interest or concern. The two sessions we have run to date have been reasonably well attended, and in the autumn we'll aim to hold sessions in Allerdale and South Lakeland.

Membership

There are 228 Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings in membership from 265 parishes in the county. Of the 231 Town and Parish Councils in the county, 219 (94%) are in membership. We now have the position that 97% 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 is continuing to develop issue based locality working focusing first on broadband. In South Lakeland the Local Area Partnerships are evolving, as is locality based working in Copeland. Following the elections Allerdale is talking with the district association about what form locality working should take there.

Other topics discussed at several Associations were the County and district proposals for spending reductions, the 'Better Highways' proposals, winter gritting, MRWS, land allocations and wind energy developments.

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 Lake District National Park Partnership.

CLLr Jocelyn Holland debates a point with Rory Stewart MP at the CALC Localism conference



Who's who in CALC 2011?

CALC Officers (2010–2011)

President:	Mr M Redgers, OBE, JP
Vice Presidents:	Miss Jo Clarke Mr S Simpson
Chairman:	Cllr Ms J Holland
Honorary Treasurer:	Mr D Johnson
Allerdale District Chairman:	Cllr V de Quincey (to May 2011) Cllr G Smith (from May 2011)
Carlisle District Chairman:	Cllr R Auld
Copeland District Chairman:	Cllr K Hitchen
Eden District Chairman:	Cllr W Collinge
South Lakeland District Chairman:	Cllr L Hallatsch (to May 2011) Cllr D Peters (from May 2011)

CALC Staff

Chief Officer	David Claxton
Assistant Chief 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
MRWS Lead Officer	Guy Richardson

All CALC staff are employed part-time

Executive Committee (2010–2011)

Cllr Ms J Holland	Chairman
M Redgers, OBE, JP	President
Miss Jo Clarke	Vice President
Mr S Simpson	Vice President
Mr D Johnson	Honorary Treasurer
Cllr B Wilson	Dearham PC
Cllr V de Quincey (to May 2011)	Bothel and Threapland PC
Cllr R Auld	Dalston PC
Cllr L Hallatsch (to May 2011 & from Sep 2011)	Windermere TC
Cllr Ms J Holland	Wetheral PC
Cllr K Hitchen	Drigg and Carleton PC
Mr D Polhill	Gosforth PC
Cllr W Collinge	Ainstable PC
Cllr K Morgan	Appleby TC
Cllr D Peters (from May 2011)	Natland PC
Cllr G Smith (from May 2011)	Crosscanonby PC
Cllr A Dalton	Drigg and Carleton PC
Cllr J Hay	Culgaith PC
Cllr L Johnson	Lakes PC
Cllr C Nicholson	Stanwix Rural PC
Cllr A Woodcock	Greysouthen PC

Accounts 2010–2011

Receipts and Payments Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2011

	2011 £	2010 £
Receipts		
Affiliation fees	28,381	43,586
Sale of Publications	208	95
Sale of Local Council Review	790	1,086
Local Authority Grants	54,500	29,952
Training	3,345	5,357
AGM	290	460
Deposit Account Interest	24	29
Open Space Protection Training	6,120	680
Managing Radioactive Waste Safely	23,094	12,326
Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership	6,000	6,700
Sundry Income	3,883	-
	<u>126,635</u>	<u>100,271</u>
Balances at 1st April 2010		
Deposit Account	51,956	50,427
Current Account	3,858	11,378
	<u>55,814</u>	<u>61,805</u>
	<u>182,449</u>	<u>162,076</u>

	2011 £	2010 £
Payments		
NALC - Affiliation Fees	12,874	12,750
Publications	244	300
NALC Local Council Review	960	1,031
Printing & Stationery	847	818
Postage and Telephone	1,126	933
Travel & Subsistence	1,678	3,501
Meetings	1,874	1,846
Advertising	-	2,009
Bank Charges	83	66
Salaries and expenses	91,551	67,962
Accountancy Fees	752	679
Honoraria	500	500
Training	4,576	6,527
Sundries	65	313
Insurance	799	784
Open Space Protection Training	1,507	448
Managing Radioactive Waste Safely	4,131	1,032
Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Programme	208	4,763
	<u>123,779</u>	<u>106,262</u>
Balances at 31st March 2011		
Deposit Account	46,980	51,956
Current Account	11,690	3,858
	<u>58,670</u>	<u>55,814</u>
	<u>182,449</u>	<u>162,076</u>

We certify that the above Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2011 is correct and in accordance with the best of our information given to us and as shown by the books.
Saint & Co, Unit 3, Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth CA13 0QT.

Cumbria Association of Local Councils
Penrith Library
St Andrew's Churchyard
Penrith
CA11 7YA

