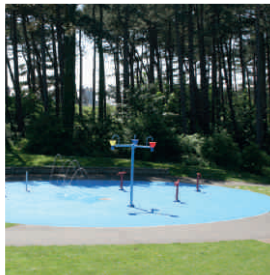
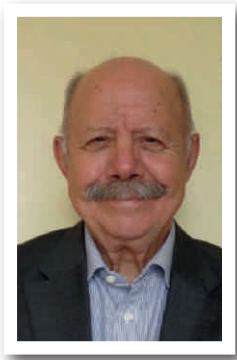


Cumbria Association of Local Councils

2017 Annual Report



Cumbria Association of Local Councils



Chairman's Report

Cllr Rick Petecki looks back on his first year at the helm.

I would like to thank Ronnie Auld on behalf of all of us for the splendid contribution he made as the previous chairman and continues to make, to this organisation.

Our officers continue to do a great job and I would like to thank them on behalf of all of us for achieving so much with such a small team.

It is the size of the team and the challenges facing our members', district and county councils which has led us to look at our organisation's role and capacity in the future.

Barrow joining our executive, if the proposal is accepted by the Annual Meeting in November, will mean that all six districts of Cumbria will be represented for the first time as we look forward to working more closely with them all.

We are increasing our engagement with the other tiers of local government to work more on the strategic issues facing our communities and to see if we can, together, do some things more effectively given the restrictions of decreasing district and county council budgets.

CALC also works with other partners across all the areas of community service like health, rural policing, flood resilience, national parks, provision of broadband, and others as well as representing parishes at the Cumbria Leaders Board and Cumbria at the national level with NALC, always trying to put forward the interests of its member organisations and the communities they represent.

We have established contact with some of our MPs and it is our intention to lobby them regularly with matters which concern our communities and the county as a whole. The continuing change in the way services are being delivered by district and county councils is driving our members to take on more roles and this in turn makes us want to make sure that they have the capacity needed in terms of skills and support. The setting of parish council precepts for 2017/18 at £6.1 million reflects this continued growth in devolved services.

It is an issue for us all that this money is spent wisely in providing better value for money for the taxpayer overall than the saving it shows in someone else's budget.

CALC supports our parishes through this change and the additional training opportunities provided this year which have been so well attended show the need for advice and support is increasing. These demands are beginning to challenge the capacity of our small part-time team.

There is an optimism and enthusiasm at the parish and town council level which should be encouraged and CALC have commissioned a survey among our members that will be used to review our organisation to ensure that we are offering a service that most effectively meets their needs and is one that our members would want it to be.

Too frequently the direct views of our parish and town councils are not sought on local issues which can affect the community and it has to be remembered that there are three tiers of local government in Cumbria. The success of continuing devolution of services will depend largely on the ability of our members to deliver the efficiencies being sought.

I hope you will support us in this and may I thank you on behalf of the officers and me personally for all the help and encouragement we have received in the last year.

Councillor Rick Petecki
Chairman, CALC

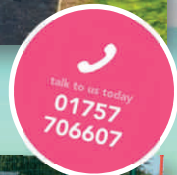
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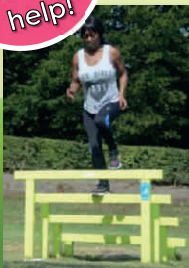


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via our website www.westfieldha.org.uk



CALC Activities in 2016 – 17

Advice Service

CALC is the only organisation giving full-time support to parish councils in Cumbria. The office in Penrith is open five days a week, 9am to 5pm to respond to telephone calls and emails from councillors and clerks. We answer questions on legal, procedural, HR, planning and financial matters.

If a question requires a legal opinion, we can pass it on to the solicitors at the National Association of Local Councils who specialise in parish law.

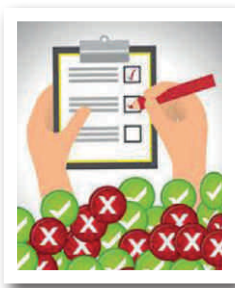
A second aim was to gain an up-to-date understanding of the work being undertaken by parish councils and the challenges they face.

The survey was made available electronically using Survey Monkey and also on paper.

A total of 88 responses were received.

Thank you to all those who took the time to complete the survey, and give us some valuable feedback.

CALC Member Survey 2017 – Summary of Key Findings



CALC commissioned a survey of its members to assess satisfaction with the services currently provided and identify any gaps in support that CALC could potentially fill.

Summary of Findings

The survey responses have highlighted a number of factors that will help us to review CALC's services to our members.

1. Few clerks who responded were new to the role. This indicates that either there aren't many new clerks around the county, or that they were under-represented for another reason. We will be considering our support for new clerks.
2. 40% of clerks have a fixed pattern of when they work their hours, either days, evenings or weekends, leaving the majority who do not.

3. The survey showed that many clerks struggle to find the right member of staff at principal authorities when trying to get things done and they perceive there are frequent changes in staffing, which they struggle to keep up with.
4. The survey also highlighted that member councils have difficulties communicating with the county council in particular.
5. The CALC monthly newsletter is valued very highly, but we will be reviewing suggestions that clerks gave for improvements.
6. The Email/Member Support System advice service and the CALC website are both highly valued – 62% had logged on to the website in the last year.
7. The survey highlighted that the current system of district association meetings are the least valued of CALC's services. We will review the suggestions made for improving the district association meetings.
8. You told us that there are areas that clerks and their council currently lack skills in. These included: social media, webchat systems such as Skype, using digital projectors, VAT, marketing, outsourcing services and managing contractors, setting the council's strategy/business planning, managing buildings and assets, and procurement.
9. Half of respondents have attended CALC training in the last year; and all rated it highly. 88% said it was either 'Extremely' useful or 'To a large extent'.
10. Over half the respondents have a specific budget for training.

CALC Survey: What Members are Most Proud of

Members take most reward from the things they have delivered for their area, such as events, play equipment, providing parks, walks and allotments. Others cited their response to flooding and their successful impact on planning issues and generally going in to bat for their parish. A few said they were proud of making the council more accessible and improving communications.

CALC will be using the information collected to review its services to ensure that we are offering a service that most effectively meets our members' needs.

Developing Your Skills 2017



During 2016/2017, CALC have delivered 44 development sessions including eleven in-house bespoke courses requested by individual parish councils, including The Good Councillor, Business Planning, Code of Conduct, Web Design and Social Media, Finance and Budgeting.

In total 323 delegates comprising clerks and councillors have attended the courses/forums. This is a significant increase from just over 200 delegates in 2013/14.

Events, Workshops and Seminars

This year, we aimed to build on the success of the course on Asset Transfers last year by extending CALC's offer of courses with nationally recognised specialists from outside the county. This year 55 people attended the day on Common Land and Village Greens and we arranged a half day seminar providing advice and guidance on how to invest parish funds at the request of a number of parish clerks.

Representing Local Councils

CALC continues 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 and broadband.

CALC represents the interests of local councils on the Cumbria Leaders' Board, where Chairman, Rick Petecki has a seat, and on the Cumbria Chief Executives Group, which CALC's Chief Officer attends.

CALC's Executive Members and officers work hard making sure parish and town councils' concerns are represented by attending a range of county-wide meetings including Nugen's Moorside project, the National Grid's Northwest Coast Connections, Connecting Cumbria arguing for better rural broadband, Cumbria Flood forum, and stakeholder engagement meetings of the Government's NHS Success Regime meetings and meetings of the Lake District National Park. Cumbria has many challenges in delivering excellent health care, especially in its rural and remote communities. CALC representatives have been continuing to engage with the discussions about future changes ahead of the next major round of public consultation.

NALC Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS)

The Local Council Award Scheme has been developed to assess local councils against national standards and to help improve three main areas: governance, community engagement and council development.

The Scheme recognises Parish and Town Councils for their work and achievements, enabling them to maximise their influence within the community and within local and central government.

These are challenging times for local councils and it has never been more important that councils strive to maintain and improve their reputation.

The scheme contains three tiers of award the Foundation Award, a good practice level award (Quality) and a more challenging and aspirational award (Quality Gold).

Two councils within Cumbria have already achieved Foundation status with others considering working towards it. We look forward to assisting more councils through the Foundation stage onwards. Please give the CALC office a ring if you want to find out more – or look on the website.

Changes to Audit Arrangements

In 2015, the Audit Commission was abolished under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The practical effect of this for parish councils is that new external audit arrangements will take effect at the end of this financial year, 31st March 2018.

Councils with an annual turnover of less than £25k will be exempt from external audit for the 2017/18 financial year – but they must publish an exemption certificate on their website. Nevertheless smaller councils will still be required to appoint an external auditor in order to allow electors the right to make representations in relation to the council's accounts.

Every parish council in Cumbria opted into the new arrangements for external audit. In theory, the process should not be materially different from arrangements in previous years for the larger councils – fees remain the same.

For smaller parishes, with a turnover of less than £25,000 pa, the information included in the annual return will not be subject to external audit but will be posted on the parish council website instead. Further information will be available after Christmas on the procedures for the Annual Return.

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

One of the key requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller councils is that certain key information relating to the council's business and financial affairs must be published online – instead of undergoing a limited assurance external audit.

In order to ensure that smaller parish councils comply, the Department for Communities and Local Government made a fund available in 2015, via NALC, to help councils off-set the cost of the purchase of laptops, scanners, broadband supply (if needed), training, website creation, officer time for uploading and other reasonable costs.

To date CALC has distributed over £50,000 in grant support to Cumbria's smaller parishes.

This fund closes on 31st March 2018 and there will be no further funding.

National Grid's North West Coast Connection Project 2016/17

The National Grid's North West Coast Connections Project will take power generated at the proposed new nuclear site in west Cumbria and feed it into the main supply lines for the National Grid. CALC has continued to monitor the project's development.

In 2016, National Grid published details of the route corridor it proposes to take forward to the next stage of the development process. The second phase of the public consultation on the proposed route started at the end of November 2016 and closed on the 6th January 2017. To assist the parishes affected by the proposals, CALC worked with project consultants WYG by setting up five workshops to advise individual parishes on their response to the, very large, public consultation. WYG created a template to help parish councils compile a robust, evidence-based response which was then copied to the national Planning Inspectorate as well as being sent to National Grid.

The autumn saw a fierce campaign from the parish councils within the Lake District National Park and those around the Duddon Estuary to prevent 50 metre high pylons being erected within their communities. A month before the consultation, National Grid announced that it had in fact reviewed its proposals for pylons inside the National Park and announced that 23.4km of cable would be buried underground instead.

This announcement was welcomed by the parishes inside the national park but the proposal did not include the pylons proposed for the Duddon estuary.

Those parish councils who believed they would be adversely affected by the proposals presented well-argued and detailed responses to the consultation, including those parishes from the Duddon valley area who made their case for undergrounding the cables.

National Grid were preparing to submit their plans to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), having considered all responses from the consultation, when NuGen announced in May that it was pausing its development of Moorside due to difficulties facing its investors. NWCC also paused its planning application as a result. No further announcements have been made in relation to either project.

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 a range of topics – this year about creating an ombudsman for parishes and looking at the abolition of business rates on public toilets, as well as on-going work on devolution, neighbourhood planning and affordable housing.

NALC is the Association's primary source of information and advice on legal matters affecting local councils – Cumbria's town councils now have direct access to legal support via the Direct Access Scheme. CALC contributes to the policies and priorities of NALC through our representative on the NALC National Council, and also CALC's Chairman, Rick Petecki.

At National Council Rick Petecki has discussed NALC's relationship with SLCC, issues around the possibility of government applying referenda principles to the parish sector, and governance arrangements for councillors.

This year NALC Chief Executive, Jonathan Owen, has focused on building relationships between county associations and their local MPs. As part of this drive NALC arranged a Parliamentary Lobby Day in March.

Rick Petecki took part and met with three MPs:

- John Woodcock MP
- Trudy Harrison MP
- Sue Hayman MP

He was met with a positive response from the MPs. They discussed the role of parish councils in Cumbria with a range of topics including the difficulties in recruiting people to work in Cumbria; the importance of broadband speeds in Cumbria; the state of Cumbria's roads and the NHS re-organisation particularly in West Cumbria.

Rick Petecki also aims to continue this work by meeting with Rory Stewart MP, Tim Farron MP and John Stevenson MP.

Regional Matters

The Association continued to participate in the work of the North West Federation of Town and Parish Councils, this year putting forward a motion to NALC's policy committee asking that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) be amended and clarified in such a way to prevent developers challenging Local Plans, contrary to the wishes of local communities and Neighbourhood Plans.

Membership

The number of town and parish councils and parish meetings in membership of the Association has been maintained in 2017, with one parish council joining CALC and one opting to become a parish meeting. Of the 233 town and parish councils in the county, 227 (97%) are in membership. Over 99% of the electors living in the parished areas of Cumbria are served by a CALC member council or meeting, and over 99% of total local council precepts are raised by CALC member councils.

Precepts

The setting of parish council precepts for 2017/18 continued to reflect growth – largely as a result of the number of devolved services being taken on by parish and town councils across the county.

The total amount raised by local councils in Cumbria by way of precepts in 2017/18 is £6.1 million, up from £5.8m the previous year, an overall increase of £315,000, which represents an increase of 5.4%.

Precepts (excluding Council Tax Reduction Support Grant payments) in 2016/17 went up to £5.9m from £5.5m in 2015/16.

In addition to their precept, most parishes receive a council tax reduction support grant (CTRSG). This grant is intended to compensate local councils for what was an effective reduction in their council tax base following the introduction of a new funding system in 2013/14. Since CTRSG was introduced in 2013/14 total payments made by district councils have continued to reduce overall. This year Copeland Borough Council was the only principal authority to stop CTRSG payments to parish and town councils altogether. The remaining authorities have continued to pass over to parishes a reduced amount.

Overall CTRSG payments now represent 3% of precept plus grant payments. In light of the reduction of Council Tax Grant being passed over to parish councils nationally, NALC continues to make representations to Government for a slice of business rates and a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy to be passed on to parishes by all principal authorities.

District Associations

In January, the CALC Executive considered a request from parish councils in Barrow that they be able to send a representative to the CALC Executive. It was agreed that if Barrow parishes set up a district association, subject to the CALC constitution, then the Executive would put the proposal to the Annual Meeting in November for their consideration.

If this proposal is accepted then all six districts in Cumbria will be represented on the CALC Executive for the first time.

The CALC District Associations for Allerdale, Copeland, South Lakeland and the Barrow Joint Rural Committee have continued to meet regularly; some three and others four times during the year, covering a range of topics of interest to local parishes including flooding, the provision of NHS services, emergency planning, devolution of assets and services, National Grid's North West Coast Connections project, broadband, highways, footway lighting, development plans and health and well-being.

Lake District National Park

CALC organised the election of a parish representative to the Lake District National Park this year – Cllr Louise Waterhouse, Lakes Parish, was elected to serve for the rest of this term.

CALC continues to convene Parish Forums in which parish councils in the Lake District National Park can come together with the National Park Authority to discuss strategic issues across the National Park and the work of the Lake District National Park Partnership. This year, the Park Authority has been reviewing its Local Plan, but this year has been dominated by the bid to become inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

Financial Support

The Park Authority first started the process 30 years ago and was delighted to hear in early July that they had finally been successful.

CALC attended a meeting with the UNESCO inspectors who had been touring the area – they were particularly interested in the communities within the park and asked many questions about the communities that live in the park during their visit.

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

On 1st August 2016, the Yorkshire Dales National Park became 24% larger. It extended its boundaries into Eden and South Lakeland (and a small part of Lancashire) – by an additional 161 square miles.

CALC has begun to engage with the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Over the summer, the Director of Park Services met with parish councils within Eden to talk about their future within the National Park.

This new area of the National Park will be promoted as the ‘Westmorland Dales’.

Our audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2017 are set out later in this annual report. We would like to thank our member councils for their continuing financial support for the Association’s work through their subscriptions. We are also grateful to the following local authorities for their financial support which is greatly appreciated.

- Cumbria County Council
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Copeland Borough Council
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Lake District National Park Authority



Who's who in CALC 2017?

CALC Officers (2016 – 2017)

President	Mr Bob Mather
Vice Presidents:	Miss Jo Clarke (resigned June 2017)
	Mr Stan Simpson
Chairman	Cllr Rick Petecki
Hon. Treasurer	Ms J Hartley (formally Wright)
Allerdale District Chairman	Cllr Rick Petecki
Carlisle District Chairman	Cllr Craig Nicholson
Copeland District Chairman	Cllr Keith Hitchen
Eden District Chairman	Cllr David Huxley
South Lakeland District Chairman	Cllr David Peters

CALC STAFF

(All CALC staff are employed part-time)

Chief Officer	Samantha Bagshaw
Parish Development Officer	Sonia Hutchinson
Parish Liaison Officer (Carlisle/Eden)	Sonia Hutchinson (temporary)
Parish Liaison Officer (South Lakeland/Barrow)	Amanda McCleery
Parish Liaison Officer (Allerdale/Copeland)	Chris Shaw

Executive Committee (2016 – 2017)

In addition to Chairman, President, Vice Presidents, Honorary Treasurer and District Association Chairs:

Cllr Ronnie Auld	Dalston PC
Cllr Peter Bales	Workington TC
Cllr Ann Byers	Dalston PC
Cllr Leith Hallatsch	Windermere TC
Cllr Jill Hay	Culgaith PC
Cllr M Higginbotham	Wetheral PC
Cllr Leslie Johnson	Lakes PC
Cllr Brian Kennish	Muncaster PC
Cllr Margaret Throp	Above Derwent PC

Accounts 2016 – 2017

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 2017

	2017		2016
	£		£
Receipts			
Affiliation Fees	48,671		50,865
Sale of Publications	406		54
Sale of Local Council Review	437		391
Local Authority Grants	44,885		49,385
Training	8,088		5,192
NuGen INWCC	3,850		-
Deposit Account Interest	950		45
NALC New Council Funding	-		1,700
Transparency Fund (CALC)	5,120		-
Sundry Income	204		-
Transparency Fund (Parishes)	19,984		28,466
Transparency Website fees including website development	1,905		-
EDC SLA	6,000		-
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	140,500		136,098
Balances at 1 April 2016			
Deposit Account	32,689		82,644
Current Account	97,286	129,975	26,771
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		270,475	245,513
		<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 2017

	2017	2016
Payments		
NALC – Affiliation Fees	19,159	16,363
Publications	389	357
NALC Local Council Review	370	297
Printing and Stationery	541	426
Travel and Subsistence	1,837	907
Meetings	4,367	4,921
Bank Charges	66	71
Salaries and Expenses	64,009	60,494
Accountancy Fees	714	594
Honoraria	500	500
Training	4,537	4,234
Sundries	187	668
Insurance	690	666
Fingertips – Agency Costs	6,479	6,235
Conference	773	793
Penrith Town Council Group	-	87
Transparency Fund (CALC)	1,617	-
Transparency Website fees	278	-
NuGen/North West Connections	2,934	-
Transparency Fund (Parishes)	29,744	17,925
EDC SLA	1,925	-
	141,116	115,538
Balances at 31 March 2017		
Deposit Account	32,707	32,689
Current Account	45,720	97,286
Cumberland Building Society	50,932	-
	270,475	129,975

We certify that the following Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 2017 is correct and in accordance with the best of our information given to us and as shown by the books.

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Chartered Accountants, Unit 3, Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth CA13 0QT



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Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) is run by local councils for the benefit of local councils. It assists councils in their day-to-day work and represents their interests.

CALC's aims are:

- Encouraging and advising good practice in local council management
- Increasing the contribution of local councils to community life
- Training and developing councillors and clerks
- Encouraging greater public awareness of the work of local councils

CALC's work is paid for by the subscriptions of its member councils and grants from the principal authorities of Cumbria and the Lake District National Park Authority.



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