

Local News and Views

Edition 4 – Autumn 2011



What can we do better?

None of us became councillors – whether parish, district or county – to twiddle our thumbs: We have done so because we feel we can make a difference.

We may have started out with lofty ideals and great ambitions but we soon find it's not so easy! As Sammy Davis Jr might say 'you can bet your bottom dollar' that not everyone will agree with decisions we make, but we continue to do our best.

None of us is infallible and no-one has a monopoly on wisdom or good ideas. Such ideas come from all directions, which is why I believe it is so important that we reach out to parish councils and harness your views and ideas.

Wherever possible we are meeting with you face-to-face, listening to your concerns, welcoming your suggestions, supporting you where we can, and delivering services such as Local Links with your help.

The current project to bring superfast broadband access to Cumbria is an excellent example of the power of a shared goal. Connecting Cumbria sees us working closely with a wide range of partners including parish councils to create real benefits for communities, businesses and visitors in a localised way.

The support of parish councils is pivotal to the project's success: to make sure that solutions to delivering superfast broadband respond to local needs and circumstances.

In this edition

- Libraries modernisation gets approval
- Broadband – latest developments
- Joint fire control room gets Cabinet go-head
- A new approach to customer services
- Improvements to community transport
- New Community Messaging Service
- Adult Social Care contracts are changing

Cumbria County Council is responsible for over 800 different functions, and 8500 people make these services happen. Following budget cuts and the Single Status pay and conditions review, staff could be excused for feeling a touch bruised and battered. I am very grateful to them and very proud of them: they are making a big difference and the county council is improving, as the following facts and figures show:

- We have reduced the amount of time it takes to fix a highway problem from 217 days to 13. We will be working to improve this even more
- The number of adults receiving local and personal social care services has risen
- Children's Services and Adult Social care have both been reported as performing well and have been rated 'outstanding' in parts
- We've seen the best ever GCSE and A Level results in Cumbria
- Fires in the home dropped six per cent last year alone and casualties from fires fell by 30 per cent - the biggest drop in mainland Britain

The contribution of parish councils to our services can make sure we continue to improve and get 'closer to the people' than ever before – we cannot do it without you.

Best wishes



Eddie Martin
Leader of Cumbria County Council

Cabinet approves a local approach to libraries modernisation



Following feedback from almost 3700 Cumbrian residents, the county council's Cabinet members have given the go-ahead for plans to improve and update the county's libraries.

We are extremely grateful to CALC and all the parish councils who took the time to give their views.

As a result of the review, which looked at ways to make the service stronger and more resilient in the future in light of falling user numbers, Cabinet members have agreed that changes to the service will be made on an area-by-area basis. They will see Local Committees in each district work closely with communities to bring about improvements.

The recommendation reflects the feedback that was received during the consultation, particularly from parish councils, that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for Cumbria given the diversity of communities in the county.

Now, work will begin to look in more detail at ways to adapt the service in each area in order to make it more accessible and inclusive through more consistent opening hours, better use of technology and a focus on access to books rather than buildings.

Cabinet has approved the use of a number of approaches to delivering the service across the county, including

- Libraries Extras: Large libraries which act as community hubs and are situated in main towns, providing a comprehensive service across the county
- The Library Link and Book Drops – a means of providing isolated communities with cost effective, consistent and increased access to library services
- Community Libraries: book stocks in places like village halls, shops or schools
- A Community Librarian – a method of taking library services out into the heart of communities, targeting hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups
- A Virtual 24/7 library: An improved website where customers can renew and order books and even join reading groups and download audio books
- The Friends Group – harnessing local support and participation

There will also be further exploration of opportunities for co-location with other services, greater income generation from rentals such as DVDs, promotion of the services available and the introduction of new online services.

A full report covering feedback gained during the review and the Cabinet report is available online at: cumbria.gov.uk/libraries/review.asp

There will be further local consultation and engagement with communities as proposals for individual local areas are developed, which we look forward to working with you on.





Connecting Cumbria through superfast broadband

Broadband project on track to get Cumbria connected

Work on the project to deliver superfast broadband to Cumbria is gathering pace with work by partners across the county taking place in recent weeks.

Key developments include a £6.7m boost for the project from Cumbria's Performance Reward Grant (read more below). The project has also been renamed from Accessible Cumbria to Connecting Cumbria through superfast broadband.

Developments will be continuing next month when we will begin work with the National Farmers' Union to discuss how partners can work together with the union to move the project forward.

Top marks for Cumbria and a boost for broadband

Connecting Cumbria has been given a £6.7m boost after Cumbrian local authorities were awarded money by the government for meeting their centrally set targets.

The funding has been allocated from Cumbria's Performance Reward Grant (PRG). The Chief Executives' Group and Cumbria Leadership Board, which is made up of local authorities in the county including Cumbria County Council, NHS Cumbria, police and district and parish councils, decide between them how to spend the money. The money from the grant will add to the £17.1m government funding that has already been allocated by Broadband Delivery UK.

Cllr Liz Mallinson, Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, said: *"I believe that the Performance Reward Grant has been allocated to the best possible cause. Improving broadband availability for Cumbria means improving the quality of life for everyone who visits and lives in the county."*

Warcop fibre walk a major success

A Warcop Parish Councillor and broadband campaigner Lindsey Annison has led a 'fibre walk' through the village and surrounding fields. On the walk, those who are keen to bring superfast broadband at speeds of 100 megabits per second to the area, and rural parts of the country in general looked at the challenges of laying fibre optic cable through the village and surrounding area.

Also present were residents, parish councillors, broadband consultants, fibre optic experts and many others. Lindsey Annison said: *"We took a route through quite a typical Cumbrian landscape so all the attendees could fully understand the kind of issues we need to be thinking carefully about when laying cable."*

"We were really pleased by the diversity of the people who attended: parish councillors, residents, businesses and many more. It's reflective of the fact that in we need to work together to make superfast broadband viable and sustainable. I would particularly encourage parish councillors to come together with their neighbours to work together, only then will we really see results."

For more information contact Lindsey Annison on l.annison@gmail.com.

Testing looks at bringing broadband to Cumbria

Projects exploring different ways to extend broadband in Cumbria's communities across the county are underway. The projects are looking in particular at how to work with communities to deliver fibre-based solutions deep into Cumbria.

Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), the government body responsible for awarding and overseeing the four national broadband pilots is supporting this work.

The East Cumbria Community Broadband Forum (ECCBF), a group of campaigners keen to get the best possible broadband connections, is one of the groups leading these projects. The Forum includes Great Asby, Northern Fells, Garsdale Dent, Fell End, and Eden Valley Digital. Members of ECCBF have outlined their specific requirements for broadband to a range of different companies.

Also, in Grange and Cartmel, a group are developing a 'data book' aimed at informing potential broadband suppliers of local information such as the location of businesses and cabinets as well as the level of interest amongst residents.

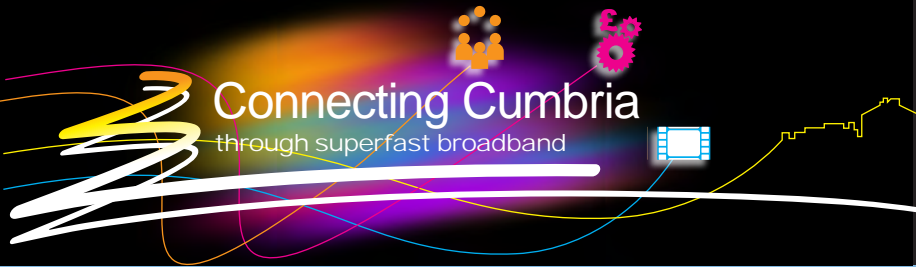
Mike Kiely at BDUK says: *"In their simplest form, the pilots will help show that there is a demand for fibre-based broadband into the least densely populated areas of the county. They will also involve communities contributing directly to the extension of the national broadband infrastructure, such as by laying cables across rural areas and negotiating wayleaves."*

The lessons learned from the projects will feed into the development of the Rural Community Broadband Fund. This is a joint initiative by Defra and BDUK and is expected to provide up to £20 million in funding to projects in England. More details about this Fund, including how to apply, will be announced later this year.

For more information contact Mike Kiely or Robert Ling at BDUK on mike.kiely@culture.gsi.gov.uk or Robert.ling@culture.gsi.gov.uk

Hub Co-ordinators network is expanding

Recruitment of Broadband Hub Co-ordinators is continuing across the county. Meetings in Allerdale and Copeland in early September saw five new Co-ordinators recruited. A meeting in South Lakeland in October is also due to see several more new Co-ordinators confirmed. A meeting in South Lakeland in October will confirm the appointment of new Hub Co-ordinators in the area. To find and contact the Hub Co-ordinator representing your parish, go online to cumbria.gov.uk/broadband.



Planning for the future

A recent meeting in Carlisle saw Hub Coordinators and Parish Broadband Champions in the district come together to plan engagement with communities.

The meeting, which was very well attended, included a session where attendees came together to discuss and begin to plan engagement in the parish clusters they represent for the next six to 12 months.

As part of this they heard from Aileen and Colin West from the Northern Fells Broadband Group. The group has been a successful example of community engagement regarding broadband.

Hub Co-ordinator Chris Drouet, who represents Orton, Cummersdale, Dalston and St. Cuthbert Without attended the event. He says: "It's very early days but we're looking at ways to sell broadband to residents so that we can make delivering the last stretch of broadband in our area, as commercially viable as possible."

"For many they know the value of a superfast connection, but others still need more information to fully understand the benefits. We think the plans will be for our Parish Broadband Champions to get out and about and meet with residents and organisations but we will be looking at this in more detail over the coming weeks and months."

New service helps Cumbria communities stay safe and in touch

A new community messaging service is helping people across Cumbria stay up-to-date with issues in their community from crime to major incidents and much more.

The new service, Cumbria Community Messaging, allows anyone in Cumbria to get up-to-the-minute information on a wide range of community issues by email, voicemail or text.

Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association is leading the project, with support from Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Community Safety Partnership and Cumbria County Council's emergency planning and trading standards teams and fire and rescue service.

It's free to receive information and members can choose the things they would like to receive information about and how and when they get it. Alerts on a range of community issues will be sent out through the system, from emergency incidents and bogus sales people, to fire safety events.

The service also gives members the opportunity to respond with information about a particular crime, a local scam, or even a missing person.

Dr John Perkins, Chair of the Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association, said: "This service takes the basic idea of neighbourhood watch – neighbours looking out for each other – and brings it right up to date to get information out to communities fast."

For more details on Connecting Cumbria, read the latest newsletter online at cumbria.gov.uk/broadband. Also online you can find FAQs, news, local contacts, interview clips and much more.

Follow Connecting Cumbria on Twitter: [@connect_cumbria](https://twitter.com/connect_cumbria)



Sign up online

Why not sign up to the scheme now, and give it a try? Go to cumbriacommunitymessaging.co.uk to register. If you think it's a valuable service please spread the word to family, friends and constituents.

Joint fire control room gets Cabinet go-head



Cumbria will be joining forces with other fire and rescue services in the North West by transferring its control room function to a single centre in Warrington.

The decision to move was made by county council Cabinet members in September, subject to call in.

This collaboration means the fire and rescue service can make better use of technology and save money while using a more resilient system.

All fire 999 call handling and fire engine mobilisation will be transferred to a local authority controlled company, NW Fire Control Ltd, in 2014.

Next summer will also see Cumbria's fire and rescue headquarters move from Cockermouth to Penrith. When this happens the control room function will move to Cheshire to temporarily take advantage of an improved system before calls are eventually taken at the North West fire control room in Warrington.

County Councillor Gary Strong, Cabinet Member for the fire and rescue service, said: *"This is the right decision for the county and one that will improve our resilience and functionality. It also makes the most of funding available from Government and helps us achieve significant savings for all fire and rescue services."*

"Understandably this is not an easy time for staff in the control room, however we will support staff in their future decisions."

All other North West fire authorities, with the exception of Merseyside, have agreed to the proposal

Read the full Cabinet report on the county council website at: <http://tinyurl.com/3wy3g7t>



What does the move mean? The facts.

Will the service change?

There will be no changes to the way the public make emergency calls but they will see improvements to the service. For example caller identification will increase the speed with which the operator can process the call and respond. It will also enable crew to be called from across county boundaries, so the nearest fire engine can be sent.

How much control will Cumbria have?

A company set up by the North West Fire Control Project will be overseen by a board of directors including two county councillors who will play a crucial role in shaping the project.

What about the implication for staff in Cumbria?

Inevitably there will not be a need to employ as many control staff. Staff in Cumbria will be supported in their future decisions and every effort will be made to reduce uncertainty.

Isn't local knowledge important?

Whilst Cumbria's control room staff have a great deal of local knowledge, the technology and staff at the new centre will be equally well trained.

In the unlikely event that operators can't get the sufficient information from callers, their location will be traced through their landline or mobile phone.

How much will this save?

The partnership means additional investment will not be required from Cumbria in the next few years. The move will also attract a Government subsidy of £36.7m which will result in significant annual savings for the council.



A new look at customer services



The council's new customer services strategy has been agreed by Cabinet. The strategy lays out the council's approach to delivering accessible and customer focussed services which are better tailored to meet the different needs of residents across the county.

The strategy makes four commitments:

- We make it easy for customers
- We treat people with dignity and respect
- We take responsibility
- We use customer feedback to improve our services

Central to the strategy is a focus on joined up services: making it easier for residents to access council information and services through a single point, rather than by contacting individual directorates or services.

A number of physical and virtual locations will become information and contact hubs, including Local Links, libraries, and the council website.

The Local Links model has already proven to be successful in several parts of the county to date. The strategy recommends that this network of Local Links will continue to be expanded, with a Link in each area supported by a smaller number of satellite sites as required.

The strategy also ties in closely with the recent libraries review. Many residents told us they would like to see libraries offer improved access to other council and community services and information. How this is implemented in each library will vary, and may involve face-to-face or online contact points.

The strategy stresses the importance of delivering services which respond to the needs of local people: councillors on Local Committees in each district will work with communities and use their own insight and knowledge of their constituencies to decide the best locations and sites from which to offer access to council services.

The new strategy puts a far greater emphasis on the development of online services, use of the council's website, and the extended use of new technologies.

Oliver Pearson, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, says: *"Putting customers at the heart of all we do is one of our top priorities within our council plan*

"Almost every one of Cumbria's 450,000 residents will at some point in their lives need to make contact with the council.

"Their needs differ greatly depending on their access to technology, their location, and their personal circumstances, and our customer services approach needs to be flexible and responsive enough to respond to that.

"We are looking forward to working with communities to developing localised approaches to customer services which really meet the needs of local people and offer a high quality, responsive and easy access to all council services."

The strategy along with the full Cabinet report on the County Council website at <http://tinyurl.com/3gqguww>



On the road to community transport improvements

A raft of initiatives to develop community transport in the county are now underway including establishing new voluntary social car schemes; supporting scheduled community transport services; top quality, free community minibus driver training and improved promotion.

Improvements will also see work take place with partners to develop access to activities for young people.

The developments are being made as a result of feedback from parish and county councillors during a recent consultation, and are being funded through the government's one-off Community Transport Transitional Fund.

Already, changes to the Rural Wheels community transport scheme have been implemented. In early September an enhanced Rural Wheels service was launched, offering an increase in days and times transport is available and improved booking arrangements.

Driver training will also help ensure groups who wish to hire a community minibus can benefit from free, top quality driver training, ensuring better safety standards. Training will be rolled-out from the end of September.

To find out about how your parish can benefit from initiatives funded by the Community Transport Transitional fund telephone Caroline Watson, Community Transport Officer, Integrated Transport Team on **01228 226725**.

Community transport in Cumbria: Did you know?

The county council supports a range of community transport schemes in addition to scheduled bus services, train services and ferries in the county.

Community transport schemes include

- Rural Wheels
- Voluntary Social Car Schemes
- Community minibuses for "not for profit" group hire
- City Wheels in Carlisle ; Ring-a-Ride in Barrow

For full details of these services visit cumbria.gov.uk/communitytransport

Rural Wheels is now more accessible than ever!

- Transport is now available between 8.30am and 6pm Monday to Saturday.
- One working day's notice is now required to arrange transport – telephone by 12 noon on the day before travel is required.
- Passengers sharing transport are now charged at 25p/mile.
- Passengers living more than 10 miles from their nearest town are now charged at a maximum rate of £3.50 per single journey.
- Applications can be made by telephoning 01228 226721 as well as by completing a paper form.

Find out more about community transport in Cumbria

Cumbria County Council is holding an event to look at how some of the county's transport needs can be met through the development of community transport.

The seminar, on 1 October at Penrith Leisure Centre from 9.45am to 1pm, will be an opportunity to learn about the ways to provide community transport and discuss ideas with those who run schemes that really make a difference to Cumbrian communities. It will include presentations about scheduled community transport services, community minibuses for group hire and what it means to be involved in the Voluntary Social Car Scheme.

For a full programme and booking form, go online to www.cumbria.gov.uk/communitytransport



New contracts will mean better social care for residents



Cumbria County Council is currently going through the process of renewing a wide range of Adult Social Care contracts with organisations that deliver services.

Currently we have more than 400 contracts and many of these have ended or are coming to an end. We need to renew these contracts to ensure that people still have access to services. The tendering process for this started at the end of July and is expected to be completed in March next year.

These tenders cover a wide range of services including domiciliary care, supported living, night services, Extra Care and housing related support services.

There have also been changes to procurement guidance and we will be tendering day services and employment services later in the year.

We want the new contracts to offer services which support people to be independent by giving them support to live as they want to and help them to participate, contribute, have real choices and do things with others in the mainstream.

For more information go online to www.cumbria.gov.uk/adultsocialcare



We want to hear from you

We are keen that Local News and Views covers the issues that matter to you.

Contact us with your comments on the articles we have covered in this edition or suggestions for us to cover in the next edition at parish.editor@cumbria.gov.uk

If you have any questions or queries about specific county council services, please contact your county councillor or the county council's Area Support Manager in your area on the contact details below.

Barrow and South Lakeland
Karen Johnson 01229 407578
karen.johnson@cumbria.gov.uk

Carlisle and Eden
David Sheard 01228 226746
david.sheard@cumbria.gov.uk

Allerdale and Copeland
Ted Thwaites 01900 706 015
ted.thwaites@cumbria.gov.uk