



Durham Rural
Community Council

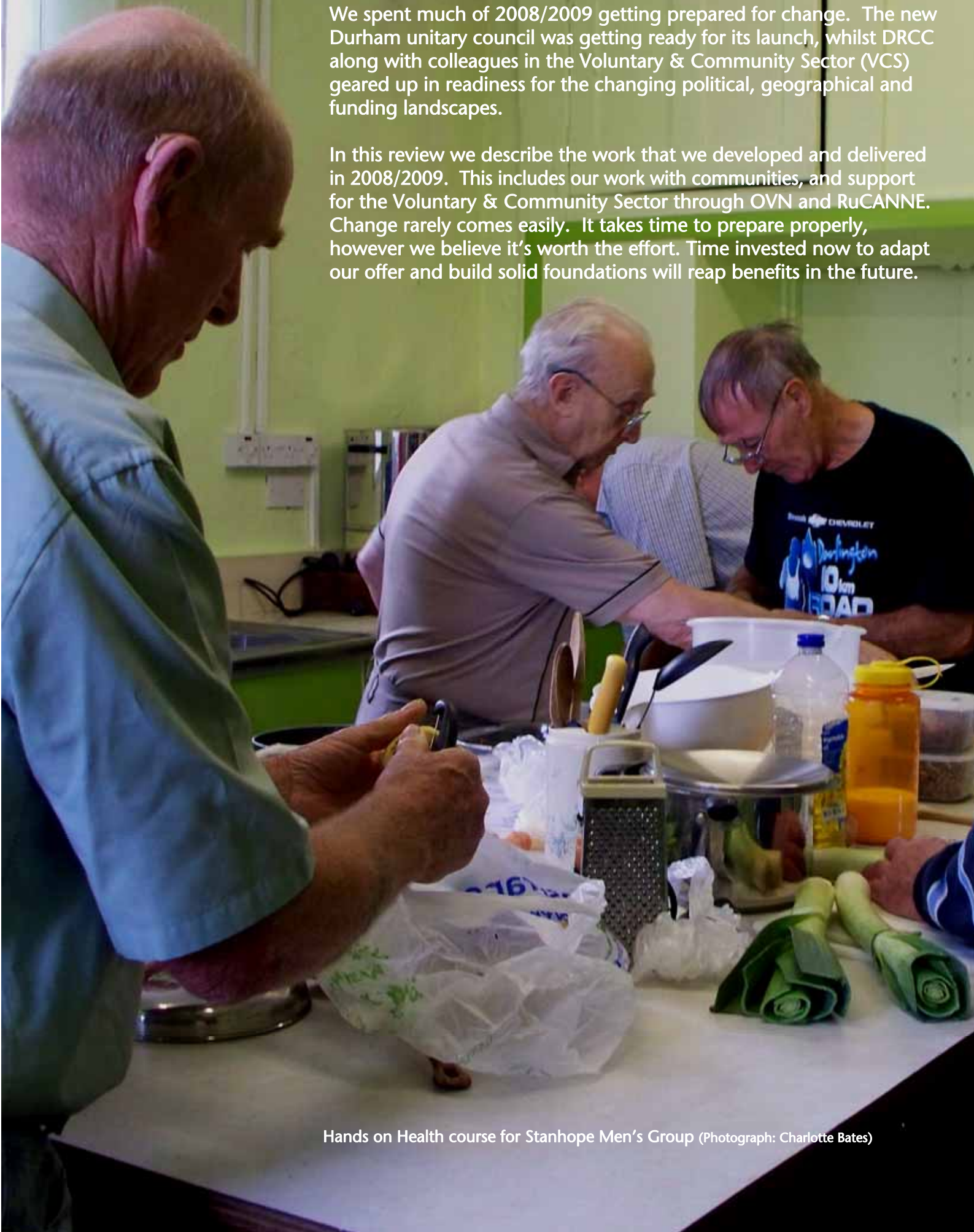


Annual Review 2008/2009

Getting prepared

We spent much of 2008/2009 getting prepared for change. The new Durham unitary council was getting ready for its launch, whilst DRCC along with colleagues in the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) geared up in readiness for the changing political, geographical and funding landscapes.

In this review we describe the work that we developed and delivered in 2008/2009. This includes our work with communities, and support for the Voluntary & Community Sector through OVN and RuCANNE. Change rarely comes easily. It takes time to prepare properly, however we believe it's worth the effort. Time invested now to adapt our offer and build solid foundations will reap benefits in the future.





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Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC) is a rural infrastructure organisation, providing support, advice and information as part of a range of services for rural communities. Established in 1935, and working right across County Durham, we are a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee. We represent County Durham's perspective on rural issues at county, regional and national levels, working with a wide range of partners to design and deliver services.



Executive Director's Review



Jo Laverick, DRCC's Executive Director at the East Durham LEADER consultation event (Photograph: Russell Hayward)

The past year was full of preparations for the new County Durham single unitary authority. The new County Durham Partnership was also established, developing from interim arrangements into a more streamlined partnership structure, to co-ordinate delivery of services for County Durham's communities.

Preparations have not been limited to our colleagues in the public sector agencies and the County Council. The voluntary sector has also been gearing up to changing political, geographical and funding landscapes. We have been testing new approaches to shared working, consulting with our community members and networks, and re-aligning the services we provide to support community groups. We have also negotiated a voice for the VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector) within the new County Durham Partnership and new Thematic Partnerships.

No period of change is easy, and we have had to pace our work to the process of change. There have been periods in the year when it has been difficult to develop new work. Important people and partners have been caught up in the changes and we have had to wait whilst new structures and lines of communication have been established.

The theme for 2008/2009 has therefore been to

hold on to the services we provide, to maintain high standards of delivery, to remain consistent in our approach, and to develop the voice of the Third Sector within the new structures as they emerge.

The outcome of this approach within DRCC has seen:

- A consolidation of One Voice Network (OVN) and the appointment of a new Director to lead on providing a voice for the VCS.
- Re-alignment of the skills and expertise in the DRCC staff team, which we had managed to build up over the course of the Rural Social & Community Programme. A re-organisation of the staff team has allowed us to develop a strong team for community led planning and for supporting community buildings. We have also sustained and developed our work on Health.



Championing the needs of people living in isolated rural communities

(Photograph of Rookhope: Russell Hayward)

- The development of a stronger regional approach to consulting and providing advocacy on rural issues through RuCANNE (the Rural Community Action Network North East). We have also been building a stronger voice from the North East into national networks which lobby on rural issues.

At DRCC, we have always worked across the whole county and our operational landscape won't be affected by the change to a single unitary authority. However we are working with challenges which are much wider than the geographical landscape in which we operate. We also need to address the ways we work with our colleagues in other VCS support organisations. This will allow us to make the most of the skills, specialist experience and local knowledge that we each possess in our respective organisations.

There is a longer term challenge to streamline our support services, providing clarity, easy access and high standards of help to community groups and volunteers who are working at the grass roots level across County Durham. We need to work together, pool resources, and make sure we have shared objectives to provide the best possible services in a climate where funding opportunities are becoming increasingly tight, and will continue to do so. We must ensure that the voices of our rural communities and of the Voluntary and Community Sector are heard.

The rural areas of County Durham are diverse and have complex levels of needs and interests. We are developing our resources to ensure that we make effective representation on behalf of rural communities, both within the new Partnerships in County Durham and at regional level. This includes the networks and agencies that have powerful roles in shaping both the policy and the delivery of programmes that affect rural communities.

We set out four strategic Aims for the period 2008 -2010 at the beginning of the year. Each was underpinned by a series of objectives that set us clear tasks to work with over the course of the year. These aims and the progress made are outlined below:

Aim One

To ensure that DRCC is an effective, thriving and sustainable organisation, continuing to offer support and expertise on rural matters to communities and policy makers in the county and the region.

Achievements:

- We reviewed and restructured the staff team within DRCC, following completion of the Rural, Social & Community Programme (RSCP). This brought skills previously funded via RSCP, into the core DRCC team.
- We mapped parishes interested in carrying out Community Plans, and held regular developmental meetings with the Durham Association of Local Councils, resulting in a series of information events and workshops for Town and Parish councillors.



RCC Staff & Trustees from Durham, Northumberland & Tees Valley at a RuCANNE meeting in Blanchland
(Photograph: Ray Tough)

- Resources for joint working with Rural Community Councils in Northumberland and Tees Valley were secured. In addition, training, workshops, conferences and joint planning sessions were undertaken, involving RCC staff, trustees and stakeholders.
- Service Level Agreements with Durham County Council and Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) were successfully signed off. New arrangements to address the transition of funding from the County Council into County Durham Partnership are being negotiated along with plans for investment beyond 2009/10.

- We secured investment from County Durham PCT that allowed us to continue and further develop our Hands on Health work with communities.
- Business cases for all aspects of DRCC's work were completed.
- We also provided two training courses for Village Halls Advisers from across the country, participated in the ACRE policy conference, and in events designed for Rural Community Council (RCC) Chairs.

Aim Two

To maintain an independent, strategic role in representing rural issues both within County Durham and across the region.

Achievements:

- We have continued to support management groups for community buildings across the county, and have provided advice and support for the transition of responsibilities for some community buildings from District to County Council ownership.
- We have worked as lead partner to support OVN, and produced successful funding proposals for Capacity Builders. These will provide the VCS with a staff team, working on behalf of the sector and strategically at county wide level, to ensure their voices are heard.
- We have disseminated and consulted on the important research report prepared by Sheffield Hallam University. This investigated the future infrastructure support needs of the VCS in County Durham.
- We have negotiated position statements on the VCS contribution towards public service delivery with County Durham Partnership and the unitary authority.
- We have organised and delivered successful events for regional partners about Rural Proofing and opportunities for networking through RuCANNE.
- We have sustained active contributions to regional level partnerships through NERAF, the Regional Infrastructure Development Group, Centre for Rural Economy and through the development of the work programme for RuCANNE.



DRCC's popular Hands on Health programme enjoyed continued success in 2008/09 (Photograph: Charlotte Bates)

Aim Three

To develop responsive, innovative and flexible programmes of work with communities, offering services that meet local needs.

Achievements:

- We continued to manage and run Hands on Health courses for disadvantaged communities across County Durham.
- We secured additional resources to run Hands on Health training for isolated individuals and targeted groups of people with special needs.
- A Town Plan was initiated and completed for Stanley and three further Community Plans were completed in smaller rural settlements.



DRCC staff organised seven local consultation events to ensure that local residents and community groups had an opportunity to contribute to the development of Stanley Town Plan (Photograph: Russell Hayward)



We consulted widely before preparing the East Durham LEADER Local Development Strategy (Photograph: Russell Hayward)

- We prepared a strategy that secured RDPE (Rural Development Programme for England) funding to deliver the LEADER approach in East Durham. This is an EU funded programme, managed in our region by One North East, that delivers bottom up community development.
- Our staff continued to provide specialist advice services for rural communities including continued liaison with Durham Association of Local Councils and the provision of workshops on Community Planning and Participatory Budgeting for Town and Parish Councillors.
- We consulted on and developed proposals for the delivery of local food strategies for East Durham and Teesdale.



We relaunched our website www.durhamrcc.org.uk and further developed our range of publications, including Community News, during the year (Photograph: Russell Hayward)

- Our staff and trustees supported, promoted and ran the CALOR Village of the Year competition. This provides communities with the opportunity to promote local initiatives, showcasing excellent local enterprise and projects.
- We co-ordinated, developed & submitted a business plan and proposals to Capacity Builders and the Big Lottery Fund for longer term development of the VCS. This helped to secure a funding programme covering the next three to five years.

Aim Four

To maintain clearly defined standards of quality across all areas of operation.

Achievements:

- ACRE Quality Standards Levels One and Two were achieved and sustained.
- We completed negotiations and delivery plans for influencing work as part of agreements with ACRE.
- We produced a regional plan for RCCs joint working in future years.

Preparation for change has also generated considerable challenges for our Board of Trustees, particularly with respect to their time and resources. Trustees have had to absorb and adapt to the complex implications of the changing political landscape both for ourselves, our colleagues in the VCS, and for communities. As volunteers, our Trustees have made the time and commitment to work with our staff and colleagues to plan for change and to understand and respond to the risks and uncertainties it has generated.

Our Chair has invested considerable time to engage with the regional network of RCC's through RuCANNE, and with the developing role of the One Voice Network.

All of our Trustees have worked throughout the year for no financial reward. I would like to thank them for their continued commitment, and our staff team who are always consistent in their professionalism, dedication and expertise to DRCC, and the services that we provide for communities.



Moving forward . . .

Having spent much of 2008/2009 preparing for change, we are now ready to meet the challenges that await us in 2009/2010 and beyond. DRCC is well used to battling ahead in the face of uncertainty. Established in the depths of the depression of the 1930's, we have already faced and overcome many challenges during our 75 years history.

Lanchester, DRCC's adopted home, boasts a proud Roman heritage (Photograph: Russell Hayward)



Working into 2009/2010

Our Annual Review is published at a time when the new year is already well advanced. All of the work that we invested in during 2008/2009 helped to set the scene for continuing development into 2009/2010.

Our priorities for 2009/2010 include:

Influencing

- Representing the VCS within County Durham and at regional level through our engagement with the County Durham Thematic Partnerships, and through our continuing support for the One Voice Network.
- Providing a voice on rural issues from County Durham into regional and national networks. The objective is to help influence, rural proof and shape policy in the interests of rural areas.

Support for community buildings

- Promoting and facilitating shared working and back office services to help community buildings sustain their local services.
- Helping and supporting local forums for community building groups with training and information.
- Providing generic advice, support and training, including work to develop quality standards, and brokering a tailored insurance scheme.

Community Planning & Participatory Budgeting

- Providing advice and information for the newly established Area Action Partnerships.
- Supporting Town and Parish Councils to carry out and deliver on community plans.
- Training and help for communities looking to develop local initiatives that arise out of community plans.

LEADER

- Continuing our support for the LEADER approach to the delivery of the RDPE in both East Durham and the North Pennine Dales. This includes practical support to

help both Local Action Groups (LAG's) develop and bring forward projects. DRCC is also responsible for the day to day management of East Durham LEADER, based in Wheatley Hill.

Health

- Continuing to deliver Hands on Health courses for hard to reach groups of people. This means building new networks within communities to promote and deliver courses, reaching individuals who are isolated from mainstream services and help. We are recruiting and training new tutors from communities, providing additional training in specialist skills for tutoring, and supporting individuals who are taking part in the courses.

Project Development

- We will continue to develop new projects where they are addressing local needs and interests. In particular, we will be working to develop a local food strategy for County Durham, alongside developmental work on Community Supported Agriculture.



Community buildings & healthy eating - two aspects of our diverse work programme for 2009/2010 & beyond.
(Photographs: Russell Hayward & Charlotte Bates)

Going the extra mile . . .



At DRCC we care about Durham's rural communities, and it shows! Our staff are always willing to go the extra mile to deliver outstanding results. Whether it's providing advice to community groups, delivering healthy cookery classes or helping out with a community plan, we'll always try to do the best we can. And if we don't know the answer ourselves, we usually know where to look or who to ask.

A local cycle track near Hesleden. Tourism and recreation are key priorities for East Durham LEADER (Photograph: Russell Hayward)



Working with our communities

Overview

During the past year our outreach work has taken us into all the rural areas within County Durham. We have worked with Town and Parish Councils and a variety of community groups, delivering a wide range of activities and services to their local communities. We have been able to provide them with expert advice and support and have delivered projects in local venues.

Some examples of our work include assisting Witton le Wear with the updating of their Parish Plan, supporting Tanfield Lea in the establishment of a cinema club, advising Castle Eden on land registration and governance documentation, and delivering a parents and children healthy eating and nutrition course.

The following pages provide a snapshot of the many and varied aspects of our work. This day-to-day activity has allowed us to build up an understanding of the current issues and concerns facing rural communities, and our expertise has contributed to national consultation exercises and events.

The CRC (Commission for Rural Communities) asked for our input into their Uplands Enquiry, and we were invited to present to the Northern Rural Networks (NRN) event due to our involvement in Parish & Community Planning.

Our outreach work will continue during 2009/2010 when Community Planning, Community Buildings and our long running Hands on Health project will again bring us into contact with groups and individuals who are keen to improve the quality of life and access to services for rural residents.

Community Buildings

Ian Pillar, our Village Halls Adviser has had another busy year. He has helped and advised almost 100 community groups across County Durham, and has also supported colleagues in other parts of the region. Ian's professional skills and knowledge have been in great

demand, and he has been instrumental in resolving complex issues relating to governance and statutory responsibilities, as well as more day to day concerns such as the establishment of cinema clubs and energy efficiency.

Our work with community groups who are involved in the management of their community facility, and the sustainability of a valuable community resource, continues to be a major component of our work in rural areas. To this end we have delivered training courses to volunteers and trustees who have requested assistance with licensing legislation, health and safety, and property maintenance.

We continue to operate an insurance scheme for village halls and community buildings within the county, and during 2008/2009 we were delighted to welcome new groups to the scheme. In the coming year we hope to extend the scheme further offering more attractive terms to members through participation in the Hallmark scheme.



HALLMARK

a quality standards scheme
for village halls

Community Buildings across County Durham
have the potential to benefit from DRCC's
newly launched Hallmark Scheme.

(Photograph: Russell Hayward)

A significant milestone for our work with community buildings was a successful grant application to County Durham Foundation. With an award of almost £14,000, we have started work on the development and delivery of a Hallmark Scheme for community buildings.

We are using an approach developed by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), the RCC's national umbrella organisation.

The scheme aims to encourage management committees to review the way they operate. In return, DRCC will offer them the support and guidance necessary to ensure a successful and sustainable facility for the future

Community Planning

Community Planning, formerly referred to as Parish Planning, continues to be an important element of our work with communities. In the past year we have advised more than twenty Parish and Town councils interested in carrying out a Community Plan. We have supported many of them with various aspects of a successful plan, including how to ensure inclusive community consultation, public meetings, data compilation and analysis, and help with writing the final document.

Previously confined to the smaller communities, Community Planning has gathered momentum. Its obvious benefits have been recognised by larger more urban settlements such as Stanley where a Community Plan was regarded as an essential tool by the relatively new Town Council.

An important task for us now is to ensure that the Action Plans drawn up as a result of Community Planning activities are recognised by the new Area Action Partnerships (AAPs); we will be working with AAP co-ordinators to ensure that they are aware of the issues raised.

Hands on Health

Our Hands on Health project has enjoyed another successful year of delivering healthy eating and nutrition courses across the county. With funding from Durham and Darlington PCT, we have worked with almost 360 adults who have attended our eight week courses. In addition, we have delivered 20 courses

Stanley Town Plan

DRCC was commissioned in November 2008 to assist Stanley Town Council in the production of a Town Plan. The aim was to give as many residents as possible the opportunity to have their say and shape the activities of the newly formed Council in the years to come.

Working to a very tight deadline, we arranged a series of seven public meetings, one in each of the wards making up the new Town Council area. Many of the recently appointed Town Councillors attended the events to meet residents and hear their views, and the DRCC team was on hand to offer advice and guide the proceedings. The information gathered at the well attended events was analysed and compared with data extracted from over 32 previous consultation documents.



The results from the consultation process were incorporated into a full Town Plan that was presented to the Town Council in March 2009. Key themes identified from the consultation process included crime and community safety, the environment and the regeneration of Stanley town centre. These priorities now form part of the Action Plan which will provide the Town Council with a blueprint for the future.

The Town Council recognised that the timescale we were operating to in the preparation of their Plan was not ideal – a Community Plan can take up to a year to complete. However, by working in partnership with the elected members and other committed individuals, we have produced a working document which will be a useful tool for the Council in the future.



Above and top - Community planning in action at Stanley
(Photographs: Russell Hayward)

aimed specifically at parents and children in primary schools. A further 300 participants have been reached in this way.

The Hands on Health ethos has remained unchanged throughout its fifteen year history. We aim to deliver practical health information and food preparation skills for local communities using a 'hands on' approach in a fun, relaxed and friendly environment. After attending our courses, our delegates should have better cooking skills, improved diet, increased confidence and self esteem, and a positive attitude towards a healthier lifestyle.

This year we have spent more time evaluating the impact of Hands on Health sessions; we are keen to know if there are longer term benefits from attending a Hands on Health course. Initial results are good with 100% of delegates reporting positive changes in their eating habits, 46% confirming that they are regularly eating more fruit and vegetables, and everyone using our healthy recipes after the courses have finished.



Healthy eating on a budget in a fun, friendly and relaxed environment (Photograph: Carol Moody)

Hands on Health could not achieve such excellent results without the support and commitment of our partners. This year we are working closely with a wide variety of organisations such as Housing Associations, Surestart, local schools, mental health support groups, the Probation Service and community associations, to make sure we reach those groups most likely to benefit from the Hands on Health approach.

Local Food

During 2008/2009, we began to develop a proposal to run a project that brings together interested parties to develop a Local Food Strategy for County Durham. The Strategy will provide a template for developing the area's capability to meet more of its own food needs. A Local Food Partnership would be established as part of the process, with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of Area Action Plans emerging from the Strategy.



Local food production in action - allotments at Blackhall Colliery (Photograph: Russell Hayward)

There has been a rapid rise in interest in this topic with more people 'growing their own' for the first time, a high demand for allotments, and the growing popularity of farmers' markets and farm shops. Whilst local isn't always better or necessarily a guarantee of quality, locally sourced produce can have many benefits. Food can be harvested and on your table the next day with little loss of nutrients, opening up the possibility of choosing varieties for their taste and nutritional value, rather than for their long shelf life or the ability to travel well.

Many people enjoy learning about how food is grown and knowing the producer personally. Getting practically involved in food production is a good way to exercise and meet new people. Buying local food also supports the local economy by directly supporting local businesses. Local food enterprises can also help to reduce carbon emissions by reduced packaging, transport ('food miles'), and by not using high energy inputs such as artificial fertilisers & pesticides.

Durham County Council are supporting the proposal through LA21 and the Sustainability Fund. We are seeking funding from a variety of sources and we hope to begin work on this project in 2010.

LEADER

In late 2007, the launch of a new round of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) provided the opportunity for DRCC to 'think outside the box' about rural development.

LEADER is a community-led, bottom up approach to delivering the RDPE, which is jointly funded by Defra and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). In our region, the LEADER approach is managed by One North East.

Decisions on funding through the LEADER approach are made at community level by a Local Action Group (LAG) comprising local community representatives.

County Durham has two LEADER partnerships. In the west, DRCC plays an active role as a member of the North Pennine Dales LEADER LAG, which covers much of the west of the county. In the east, we played a pivotal role in the development of a new LEADER LAG, and now manage the process on a day to day



Consultation event (above left); strategy document (above right); map of LEADER area (right)
(Photographs & map: Russell Hayward)



In the past rural strategies and funding have often been concentrated in the west of the county. As a county-wide organisation, we were concerned that smaller rural communities in east Durham were often overlooked, despite the area as a whole receiving significant amounts of 'top down' regeneration funding. We also wanted to challenge the misconception that the west is the only rural part of the county.

Past experience tells us that a more community led approach to regeneration can often prove to be the most successful delivery model. We therefore decided to submit an 'Expression of Interest' to run a LEADER initiative in East Durham. We determined an area that was coherent in its geographical, economic and social character and put forward valid reasons why it could benefit from LEADER.

We were delighted to be asked to submit a full proposal and launched into further consultation, contacting numerous people who could help us to create a Local Development Strategy. A consultation workshop was held in April 2008, where enthusiastic delegates were asked to identify the assets of the area, and to use them to suggest possible projects that would address the development issues.

The strategy was approved in June 2008, and a shadow Local Action Group was quickly established. Progress seemed slow at first with many bureaucratic details to be ironed out and a Manager to recruit.

Louise Johnson was appointed LEADER Manager in January 2009, and projects are now beginning to come forward to the LAG for approval.

The CALOR Village of the Year

Durham Rural Community Council is delighted to organise the CALOR Village of the Year competition in County Durham.

Each year communities with fewer than 5,000 residents from across the county are encouraged to enter the competition.

Entrants are judged on key aspects of village life, including the people, the environment, communications and business.

The judges are encouraged to seek out 'well balanced, pro-active, and caring communities' that have made the best of local opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all inhabitants.

CALOR sponsors the annual competition, and a representative attends our Annual Meeting each October to present the prizes. Read about Tanfield Lea and Whorlton, the winners of the 2008 competition below.



Two villages triumphed in the Calor County Durham Village of the Year Competition in 2008. The village of Tanfield Lea was the overall winner of the competition, gaining the prestigious title of Calor Durham Village of the Year for 2008 as well as £800 in prize money. Coming in a close second and securing the runner's up prize to the value of £200, was the tiny village of Whorlton, with a population of just 200.

Competition organiser, Ken Hazelwood, commented that 'entering the local competition is a great way for community groups - working together with the support of residents and the parish council where possible - to achieve common goals. The results can be extremely beneficial and provide a real boost for the whole community.'

Presented with four startlingly different short-listed villages, each one defining the concept of 'community' in some unique and characteristic ways, made the judging process an extremely difficult one.

A Tale of Two Villages



Representatives from the winning village of Tanfield Lea receive their prize and a commemorative plaque at DRCC's 2008 Autumn Meeting
(Photograph: CALOR Village of the Year)

As the Calor Durham Village of the Year for 2008, Tanfield Lea was nominated to represent the county in the prestigious Calor Village of the Year® for England competition, where it achieved a 'sustainability' category win and a prize of £500, in the northern region competition.

Representatives of Tanfield Lea and Whorlton villages celebrated their success at a presentation event as part of DRCC's Autumn Meeting, where they were presented with framed commemorative certificates.

Tanfield Lea Partnership wisely decided to use the prize money from both competition successes to strengthen its operational reserves, securing a healthier future for itself.

Many hands

At DRCC, we recognise that 'many hands make light work'. We value partnership working, whether it's helping people with a community plan, getting the most out of a Hands on Health cookery course, or working with our partners to influence national policymakers to ensure that the needs and concerns of rural residents are taken into account.



Working together to get the job done at a Hands on Health cookery session
(Photograph: Lesley Millgate)



Working together

Overview

We could not achieve much of what we do without the help and support of a wide range of partners both within the county and further afield.

Many of our most successful events are arranged and delivered in collaboration with the Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) who actively promote our services to their members. CDALC also works in partnership with us to manage and administer the County Council Quality Parish Bursary Scheme which is now in its third successful year.

Weardale Community Partnership is one of the many community groups we work with, and their support was invaluable during a recent national consultation process. The County Council Community Development Team supports our Parish and Community Planning work, and Durham and Darlington PCT provide the funding for our extremely successful Hands on Health project. We also collaborate with our colleagues in the CVS network throughout the county, both directly and through One Voice Network (OVN).

This is just a sample of the range of organisations that we work with. Many hands do indeed make light work, however its also fair to say that the work that we do cannot be delivered in isolation. It is only by involving those who are as committed as we are to the needs of rural communities, that we can make a difference.

Rural Community Action Network North East Better known by its acronym, RuCANNE, the regional network for the three RCCs from Northumberland, Durham and Tees Valley continued to develop and build on the networking and shared intelligence that was initiated during 2007/08.



RCC Staff & Trustees from Durham, Northumberland & Tees Valley at a RuCANNE meeting in Durham
(Photograph: Ray Tough)

RuCANNE had begun with a focus to bring our trustees and staff groups together. The aim was to weigh up our individual and collective strengths and opportunities for us to collaborate more closely. We shared training, workshops and networking through both formal and informal activities. The benefits were evident in an increased and shared understanding about how changes in the region would be affecting rural areas.

Communities and the land

DRCC's 2008 Spring Meeting held at Shotton Hall in Peterlee looked at the connection between people and the land. Delegates had an opportunity to attend two workshops that provided examples from the county of how communities are working to improve their local environment and quality of life.

One workshop, 'Changing Place, Changing Lives', was run by Stephen Armstrong & Julie Form from Groundwork. They explained how Groundwork works in partnership to bring about social, economic & environmental regeneration.

They took delegates through the process of planning, funding, and delivering projects to improve the local environment.

The second workshop, 'Community Supported Agriculture' (CSA), explained where this model of providing local food came from, and showed examples from different countries where it is working. It is described as a 'partnership between producers and consumers where the risks and rewards of farming are shared'.

Liz Charles then talked about two new CSA projects - Growing Together and Weardale CSA.

Unitary Councillors Event

We wanted to make sure that the newly appointed unitary authority councillors were aware of the support and assistance we could offer them and the communities they represent.



Of course, many of the councillors already knew about DRCC's long track record of working with rural communities, to improve the quality of life and access to services for residents. Indeed some of them refer groups to us on a regular basis. However, we took the opportunity last July, to arrange a meeting at County Hall in Durham, where we could showcase some of the work that we have been involved in and demonstrate to members the wide range of support we could offer.

The well attended event attracted over 40 councillors. One new Councillor was heard to say ' I had no idea what DRCC could offer, I will be sure to use them in the future.' True to their word, several of the newly elected members have since approached us for advice. The event was organised with the help of the Durham Association of Local Councils, one of our most important partner organisations.



Above and top - DRCC's Unitary Councillors Event held at County Hall in Durham (Photographs: Russell Hayward)

We developed a strategic understanding about the diversity of the rural areas in the North East. A particular outcome of this work has been collaboration between our staff groups and trustees on the tools and resources we have for working with communities.

Our Community Building Advisers have worked very closely together during the year. They have assessed opportunities for pooling resources to address the common issues that affect community buildings across the region. Subsequently, they have designed and delivered a number of training events and workshops, both for volunteers who manage community buildings, and for staff who support and advise community buildings groups.

A further benefit has been some shared working on case studies, particularly with respect to governance issues and deeds of ownership for groups in Northumberland and Durham. This approach has developed skills within our own staff teams and has generated some valuable case studies which will help with future queries as they arise.



During the course of the year, RuCANNE has developed much stronger links into ACRE (the national network for RCCs in England), and into the Commission for Rural Communities, which carries out research on rural issues and reports to government. ACRE has a powerful lobbying role within government departments such as CLG, the Office of the Third Sector and Defra. Through RuCANNE, we have been able to provide a co-ordinated voice into the board of ACRE on behalf of rural communities in the North East. We have also been able to supply case studies and examples of good practice to illustrate our representation.

In December 2008, the three RCCs came together for a conference to look at how we should develop RuCANNE, and to identify some priorities for future working. Staff and

Trustees participated, producing an Action Plan of projects and initiatives that were to be developed at regional level. This included proposals to develop a project for Back Office Support (targeted both at RCC's and at community building groups).

The Action Plan also highlighted a need for further developmental work and resources to build an evidence base for rural working in the region. It also identified an additional and specific need to compile evidence and intelligence which comes out of Community Plans across the region. The evidence should be used to assist sub-regional and regional partnerships in their understanding about the

priorities that rural communities have identified, helping to tailor local services more effectively.

An objective and external evaluation of the work of RuCANNE was commissioned, in order to assist the membership to assess its future relationships with other stakeholders and agencies with interests in rural issues. The outcome of the evaluation has encouraged RuCANNE to widen its membership and to develop stronger more collaborative relationships with other networks in the region.

The Action Plan from RuCANNE's December conference and the recommendations from the evaluation has set the tone and priorities for continuing work in 2009/2010.

Autumn Meeting

We decided to feature the relatively new concept of Participatory Budgeting at our 2008 Autumn Meeting held in Wolsingham.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending priorities for a defined public budget and can be a somewhat difficult concept to explain. So we decided to give our delegates an opportunity to have a go with a simulated exercise put together by our staff.

With a notional budget of £30,000 to spend, delegates were asked to vote to determine which project received funding.



Trying it out for size! (Photograph: Russell Hayward)

Projects as varied as young people's activities and post box improvements were presented by each member of our team. Delegates voted and at the end of the exercise the winners were announced. It was an enjoyable way for delegates to see PB in action and was backed up by an authoritative presentation by the national Participatory Budgeting Unit

We can see that the PB process will be a useful tool to employ at the end of a Community Planning process where the priorities identified in the Action Plan could be addressed using PB methods.

We will continue to advocate the approach and will be offering our support to any budget holder interested in trying it out.



Jez Hall from the Participatory Budgeting Unit explains the main features of the scheme (Photograph: Russell Hayward)



All hands to the pump

Preparing for change on the outside means making changes within to ensure that our organisation is fit for purpose. It really has been all hands to the pump. Everyone has played a part, procedures have been reviewed, and new staff have joined us ready for the challenges that lie ahead. Sedgefield Parish Pump (Photograph: Russell Hayward)



Organisational change

The past year has seen significant changes within DRCC's own organisation. In this section we review some of the key developments during the year, including changes within One Voice Network, our Staff Team and Board of Trustees.

One Voice Network

As the VCS consortium for County Durham, OVN has this year been the focus and channel for developing a new role for the Third Sector in the county. The recommendations emerging from the 'Shape of Things to Come' report, set the tone for a process of intensive consultations within the VCS, with the new County Durham Partnership and the County Council.

At the heart of the consultations and negotiations was the issue of the future shape and role of the Voluntary Sector as equal and committed partners in the County Durham Partnership. The move from six District Councils to a single unitary authority triggered significant changes in the geography, local affiliations and funding arrangements for six locally based CVS's. Their collective and individual roles in the delivery of local services to local community organisations had to be re-assessed and streamlined. This was to meet the strategic requirements of the new county-wide partnership, and the emerging Area Action Partnerships, which were also planned to operate in localities with new boundaries.

The County Durham Partnership made funding available to the infrastructure support organisations, which included all CVSs and DRCC. The funding allowed for developing collaboration between the VCS organisations, and to negotiate a set of proposals for future delivery of services.

OVN retained a seat at the Interim Board for the County Durham Partnership. It is providing representation for the sector as a whole, and negotiating a strong role for infrastructure support, particularly contributions towards the delivery of the targets in the Local Area Agreement. OVN was also the conduit for opening negotiations with the new County Council on the future role of the VCS and how funding will be invested into the Third Sector.

For a large part of 2008/2009, responsibility for the representation, consultation and negotiation was shared between DRCC and a couple of key partners on behalf of OVN. However, it was clear that consistent resources were needed to manage and promote this work and to develop the consortium sufficiently, so that OVN is able to contribute as a strong member of the partnership and champion the Third Sector cause with public sector agencies.

Employing the evidence we had gathered, and our internal consultations, we developed a Business Plan and funding proposals for Capacitybuilders and the Big Lottery Fund. In Summer 2008, we successfully attracted sufficient resources from Capacitybuilders to develop the consortium and recruit staff to work on behalf of the VCS across the County. The funding will allow work to continue until 2011.



In December 2008 we appointed Simon Davidson as the new One Voice Network Director. His first task was to recruit two further members of staff to begin longer term development work with VCS organisations. Linzi Ford and Sue Graham joined OVN in May 2009. Simon has a pivotal role representing the voice of the Third Sector. He sits on the Board of County Durham Partnership and has been forging relationships with the Senior Management Team at the County Council.

Simon maintains an objective role, working with the OVN Steering Group, assisting members to review the consortium, refreshing the County Durham Compact, developing new Terms of Reference, establishing new collaborative protocols, building relationships between Trustees from VCS organisations, and developing new communities of interest. 2009/2010 will consolidate and test most of this work, advancing the delivery proposals and testing collaborative arrangements between individual organisations.

Staff Developments

Several well known faces have left us during the year to take up new career opportunities. Lindsay Nicholson, our popular Rural Development Officer moved on to take up a new role with Gateshead Council, whilst Carol Moody and Allison Robson both secured positions with County Durham PCT. We also said farewell to Rita Minnikin, a member of our cleaning staff based at The Knoll in Wheatley Hill.

We also welcomed several new faces to the DRCC team. Simon Davidson joined us as One Voice Network Director. We were also delighted to welcome Liz Charles as a Project Development Specialist, working with East Durham LEADER to engage the business sector and young people, and progressing our work on Local Food. Liz is a familiar face, having previously been seconded to us from Durham County Council, to work with the Rural Social & Community Programme. Louise Johnson also joined in January 2009, as East Durham LEADER Manager.

Many of our existing staff also began their new roles. Lesley Millgate moved across to lead the new Development Team, whilst Russell Hayward headed up the Core Services Team and assumed responsibility for developing DRCC's web presence. Both members of staff attended the 'Reaching Out' Management Training programme to further develop their skills. Charlotte Bates picked up the Hands on Health baton, following the departure of Carol & Allison.

Trustee Developments

Our Board of Trustees continued to meet on a quarterly basis throughout the year. In addition, the Finance & Employment sub-committee met regularly under the guidance of our new Treasurer, Gavin Bestford. During the year we said farewell to Harry Barron and Dennis Dunn who decided to step down after almost three years service to the board. Both Trustees were strong supporters of DRCC, and we greatly appreciated their tireless contribution.

Corporate information

Board of Trustees

Our Executive Committee (Board of Trustees) is drawn from Members of Council.

Trustees serving during 2008 / 2009 were:

Cllr Joe Armstrong
Dr Sarah Banks
Mr Harry Barron
Mr Glyn Bateman
Mr Gavin Bestford (Treasurer¹)
Mrs Kate Culverhouse
Mr Dennis Dunn
Mr John Espiner (Vice Chair²)
Mrs Jenny Flynn MBE (Chair)
Mrs Judith Lund MBE
Mr Alex Peart
Mr John Robinson
Mrs Mary Tribe (Vice Chair)
Mrs Pat Wynne CBE

Notes

¹ Mr Bestford served as Vice Chair until his appointment as Treasurer in October 2008.

² Mr Espiner served as Treasurer until his appointment as Vice Chair in October 2008.

Secretary & Executive Director

Mrs Joanna Laverick (Not a Director of the Company nor a Trustee of the Charity)

Registered Office

Park House.
Station Road
Lanchester,
County Durham DH7 0EX

Company registered number: 309329

Charity number: 229119

Website: www.durhamrcc.org.uk

Auditors

Baker Tilly UK Audit LLP,
1 St James' Gate,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4AD

We are a member of the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN), and hold ACRE Level 2 Quality Standards & Investor in People Status.





DRCC staff employed during 2008/2009

Based at Park House, Lanchester:



Jo Laverick
Executive Director



Russell Hayward
Core Services Manager



Lesley Millgate
Development Manager



Ken Hazelwood
Rural Development Officer



Ian Pillar
Village Halls Adviser



Charlotte Bates
Hands on Health /
Support Co-ordinator



Liz Charles
Project Development
Specialist



Lindsay Nicholson
Rural Development Officer
Until January 2009



Carol Moody
Hands on Health
Co-ordinator
Until January 2009



Allison Robson
Hands on Health
Co-ordinator
Until January 2009

Based at The Knoll, Wheatley Hill



Joy Frostwick
Finance Manager



Simon Davidson
One Voice Network Director
From December 2008



Jo Myers
OVN Administrator



Louise Johnson
East Durham LEADER Manager
From January 2009

Based at Greenhills Centre, Wheatley Hill

Not pictured:

Linda Fenwick, ICT Support; Anne Lewins, Cleaner (both based at Park House) & Rita Minnikin, Cleaner (based at The Knoll) until April 2008.

Getting in touch:

Staff based at Park House may be contacted on 01207 529621 (fax: 01207 529619)

Staff based at The Knoll may be contacted in 01429 823067 (fax: 01429 823677)

Louise Johnson may be contacted on 01429 824743

E-mail address details are as follows:

Jo Laverick	joanna.laverick@durhamrcc.org.uk
Russell Hayward	russell.hayward@durhamrcc.org.uk
Lesley Millgate	lesley.millgate@durhamrcc.org.uk
Ken Hazelwood	ken@durhamrcc.org.uk
Ian Pillar	ian@durhamrcc.org.uk
Charlotte Bates	charlotte.bates@durhamrcc.org.uk
Liz Charles	liz.charles@durhamrcc.org.uk
Joy Frostwick	joy.frostwick@durhamrcc.org.uk
Simon Davidson	simon@onevoice.co.uk
Louise Johnson	louise.johnson@eastdurhamleader.org.uk

Oiling the wheels

During times of change, it's sometimes hard to remain focused on the bread and butter issues. However it's really important to 'oil the wheels' to keep the engine on track. We keep a close eye on the finances, controlling our costs and working hard to deliver value to our funders.



County Durham's rural communities have experienced many changes over the years, and Shildon is no exception. However the town remains true to its railway roots, reflected at the Locomotion Museum and in streetscape improvements in the town centre. Now Shildon is preparing for the changes that lie ahead by developing a community plan with a little help from DRCC. (Photograph: Russell Hayward)



Financial Summary

Overview

The following summary has been extracted from the Audited Accounts of Durham Rural Community Council for the year ended 31 March 2009. This summary may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of DRCC's financial affairs. If you would like a full copy of our 2008/2009 Audited Accounts, please contact Russell Hayward at Durham Rural Community Council, Park House, Station Road, Lanchester, County Durham DH7 0EX.

Policies and procedures

We operate all of our activities on a full cost recovery basis. The Board of Trustees will only endorse activities, projects or programmes of work, which are fully funded. Our financial planning follows an annual cycle, linked into the Business Planning and reporting rounds. The financial year runs between April and March. All activities planned for the year ahead are set out in an annual Business Plan and Work Programme for DRCC.

The annual budget for DRCC's core costs is set by the Board at the start of each financial year. Income and projected expenditure for programmes / projects and work streams during the year are factored into the budget as overheads. This is done on a pro-rata basis, as the reporting and monitoring rounds for projects / programmes are significantly variable, and subject to funders' requirements. We operate an accounting system which ring fences project / programme funding within our accounts so monitoring and auditing systems are transparent.

Against a backdrop of rapidly changing policy and funding cultures it has continued to be difficult to plan or develop services for the long term. The Trustees & Staff have worked together to minimise the impact of reducing income streams for infrastructure support organisations such as DRCC.

Principal funding sources embrace:

1. Core activity - enables the organisational management structure. It also includes our

strategic planning, information & consultative activities with partners and stakeholders in the rural areas of County Durham. During 2008/2009 we operated core services through Service Level Agreements with ACRE and with Durham County Council. Incoming resources from these funders amounted to £83,012 and £23,460 respectively. A further transitional payment for 2008/2009 to help with core costs was made to DRCC from the County Council, on behalf of County Durham Partnership. This amounted to £47,226. Expenditure was maintained within budget.

2. Programmes / Projects / Workstreams - this work informs our strategic input at regional and sub regional level. It forms the basis of our linkages with community and locally based organisations. Broadly the work areas cover health, social inclusion, community buildings, VCS support and community planning. The work is funded through a combination of Service Level Agreements, grant aid or funding linked to public policy rounds. Some of the funding is brokered through consortia arrangements with partners in the VCS (Capacitybuilders, Big Lottery Fund) and some is targeted more closely into specific geographical areas, or areas of interest, which DRCC develops with communities.

We continue to work with a wide range of funding sources and systems including Government, European, Local Authorities, and Charitable Trusts. We also draw some income from our capital assets, which comprise two buildings at Park House in Lanchester & The Knoll at Wheatley Hill. Both buildings house our staff offices and a small number of tenants, from whom we draw rental income.

Surplus cash balances are invested on deposit to earn interest at the best available rate, having due regard to the balance between risk and reward. DRCC also provides a number of administrative and printing services for community organisations, which generate a small income. This includes printing, conference room hire and training facilities.



Durham Rural Community Council Limited: Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income & Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2009

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
<i>Voluntary income:</i>				
Grants	4	214641	-	214641
<i>Activities for generating funds:</i>				
Rental income		25802	-	25802
Insurance commissions		11697	-	11697
Other income		63094	-	63094
<i>Investment income</i>	3	15396	-	15396
Incoming resources from charitable activities:				
Grants receivable	4	-	483963	483963
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		330630	483963	814593
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Costs of generating funds		3343	-	3343
Charitable activities		294745	327310	622055
Governance costs		14078	-	14078
TOT. RESOURCES EXPENDED	5	312166	327310	639476
NET INCOMING RESOURCES BEFORE OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES	6	18464	156653	175117
Gains on revaluation of fixed assets for charity's own use	7	15000	-	15000
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		33464	156653	190117
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Balances brought forward		599489	123021	722510
Balances carried forward		632953	279674	912627

Notes refer to the p19 - 28 of the main Audited Accounts available on request from DRCC

This financial statement was approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on 27 August 2009.

Acknowledgements

The Staff and Trustees of Durham Rural Community Council gratefully acknowledge the support of all our funders, including ACRE, Big Lottery Fund, CALOR, Capacitybuilders, Community Foundation, County Durham Foundation, County Durham Primary Care Trust, Defra, Durham County Council, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and One NorthEast.

We also thank our members, our partners, and our many customers living in rural communities across County Durham and beyond for their support.



Ian Pillar, DRCC's Village Halls Adviser delivering training to staff from RCC's across England (Photograph: Ian Pillar)

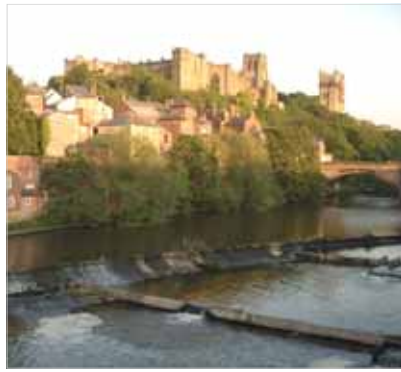
Credits

Front cover pictures (all photographs by Russell Hayward unless otherwise stated) - clockwise from top right: RuCANNE meeting (Ray Tough); West Auckland; LEADER event; Escomb Saxon Church; Food & Craft Fair; Rookhope; Unitary Councillors Event; Durham Cathedral (Pat Wynne CBE); Kitswell Park, Lanchester.

Back cover pictures (all photographs by Russell Hayward unless otherwise stated) - clockwise from top right: RuCANNE meeting (Ray Tough); Durham Heritage Coast; Planning for Real

event; Wheatley Hill Colliery Wheel; Parish Planning Event; Trimdon Parish Church; Unitary Councillors Event; Durham Castle & the River Wear (Pat Wynne CBE); Kitswell Park, Lanchester. Internal photographs are credited separately.

This Annual Review was written by the DRCC Staff Team. Editing, design & layout of the document was the work of Russell Hayward. The document was printed in-house by Durham Rural Community Council.



Park House, Station Road, Lanchester,
County Durham DH7 0EX
01207 529621

www.durhamrcc.org.uk