

Alston Moor and Fellside Place Action Group (PAG).

Report by Michael Hanley (MH).

1. Discussed Action Log.

(a) Grisedale Croft (GC):

MH had discussed the situation with Pat Bell (PB, WAF councillor who's Portfolio includes GC). MH would see PB the following day and get further information about GC.

Possible working group with site visit and feasibility study was discussed. GC thought to be part of the assets of WAFC. MH spoke to PB the following day. Any plans for GC depend on what will happen to Alston Community Hospital. PB thinks it is inappropriate to do site visits and feasibility studies at this stage. MH will email her for more details.

(b) Food Bank:

Mark Nash-Williams (MNW, Vicar, Alston): Had a discussion with Fellside Methodist minister who thought a food bank would be a good idea.

H Hanley (HH, Alston Moor Food Bank): AMFB is unusual. We don't hold any food, we buy directly from local shops and deliver to clients. We have about five deliveries per month. People with disabilities and working families are our main clients.

Money comes from donors, the Co-op Community Fund, WAFC, AMPC and the Masons. Some people who have received food parcels have given money back (when they were able). It is not clear how a food bank would work in Fellside.

M Robinson (MR, WAF Councillor): Some of the £6k PAG grant could go to help set up a Fellside Food Bank (FFB). Doug Banks works for the Penrith Food Bank and will probably be interested.

HH: We have never had any enquiries (requests for food) from Fellside. We have the structures and policies and we know what works.

Sue Castle-Clarke (SCC, Ousby PC): In the Eden Locality Papers last week there were quite a few food banks around Eden who have received grants (from WAFC).

Kate Clement (KC, WAFC Community Officer): The Household Support Fund gives money to people to help with things like heating.

Mr and Mrs Henderson (Glassonby): We are associated with the church (also interested in forming a Fellside Food Bank).

KC: You have to be a constituted organisation before you can apply for grants.

MR: HH and Tony Willis (TW, AMFB) can help you set up.

TW: We could help you by holding your funds while you get set up.

HH: We only got charity status a year ago so extending to Fellside might be complicated (changing the constitution etc). Rural poverty is easily hidden. School secretaries are gold mines for information.

MR: According to a recent report child poverty in England is expected to rise to 31% (of all children). That is frightening.

SCC: Discussed current poverty study in Eden.

Alix Martin (AM, AMPC): The schools know which children are poor because of free school meals.

HH: I am willing to come and do talks (to help set up FFB).

(c) Community Transport Scheme

TW: We had an exploratory meeting with Derwent Valley Car Club (DVCC) before Christmas. They have 8 vehicles and have been going for 10 years. They are helping people set up similar car clubs in Keswick and Weardale. There was a second meeting last week. We had thought of

applying for a feasibility grant but decided against it due to high insurance costs and administration load. DVCC have some really good software. We would need to have a shared scheme with Fellside to make sufficient scale with costs and admin.

Howard Bellis (HB, Ainstable PC): Asked about the Co Wheels organisation (one branch of this car club is at Penrith Train Station).

KC: We would need to look at a feasibility study. I don't think Co Wheels would be relevant and it would be more expensive (its a commercial business, not a charity).

TW: We run a Social Car Scheme (SCS) and it is well used in Alston. We don't want to destroy it. SCS. A feasibility study would be important.

HH: With DVCC, 50% of their journeys are volunteer driven, which is the work of our Social Car Service.

KC: Asked about a feasibility study.

HH: Some members of DVCC can do this.

KC: We have to have the grant application forms back by the 24th of February.

MR: I suggest £2k for each feasibility study: Housing, Car Club and Fellside Food Bank.

SCC: Seconded MR's funding proposals.

(d) Playgrounds

Darren Todd (DT, Langwathby playground): We have applied for various grants. Described how far they have got (Total present cost of playground:£92k, currently raised: £14k). Asked if any money would come from the PAG.

MR: Neighbourhood plans are going to be very important. The PAG will also be very important in getting different communities together and not to have to reinvent the wheel.

KC (to DT): You can apply for grants from the Children and Young Peoples fund and the 0-19 year Childrens Fund. We could have a group meeting.

MR: There is also the Community Grants Fund.

Sarah Hinkley ((Melmerby playground): Asked for funding guidance. We have a quote of £30k for our playground.

KC: All your voluntary work counts for match funding.

2. Affordable Housing

Fran Richardson (FR, ACT:Action with Communities in Cumbria): Discussed how ACT could help with affordable housing in this area.

MR: There is a shortage of affordable and rented accommodation. We have empty houses. With the new government targets, WAFC has a target of 1331 new homes or houses per year (previous target was about 200). We need to ask Fran how we go about a housing needs survey.

FR: We are a rural development charity. You have talked about community transport, rural poverty and housing. My role is in community housing and rural voice. Affordability, supply and suitability are the main focuses. Challenges in viability, small rural communities with small developments (5-10 houses). It is much more expensive to build 5 houses than 50. You have a population of about 6400.

9 parishes ranging from 300 to 2000 residents. A very sparsely populated area at 13 people per square kilometre. Eden has 25 and England 400. You are extraordinarily sparsely populated. Virtually all investment goes to the larger centres (with good transport links). You are going to have to take an imaginative approach because with lack of services like a bus service, schools etc, there is less likelihood of attracting affordable housing.

MR: We need to demonstrate a need for housing.

FR: Eden Housing have a particular interest in rural affordable housing. A Rural Housing Enabling Service has been set up.

MR: WAFC have called for sites.

FR: We can help you talk to your communities about housing and help with a housing needs assessment locally at a parish level. A housing needs survey would tell you how many houses and what type are needed. Once that is known then a partner could be sought to deliver this. I would really like to help.

AM: We have just been turned down for a bus service because we don't have enough people. Eden Housing did sell off homes and pulled down garages.

HH: Asked about the increase in council tax on holiday lets and whether this has made any difference (an increase in rentable accommodation).

FR: I don't think it will make much of a difference.

SCC: Its difficult for people who are on minimum wage to be able to afford to buy an affordable house, even if it is at 60% of market value. Asked about the cost of advice from ACT.

FR: We are funded to do this.

SCC: We need a nominal fund.

MR: £2k each to those three: food bank, car club and housing needs survey.

Vote: Unanimous in favour.