

South East Northumberland Voluntary Sector Network

Wednesday 13th April 2015 10.30 – 12.00 noon Trinity Church, Ashington

Notes of meeting

1. Introductions

After attendees introduced themselves Rodney James (chair) informed attendees of the change of name of the group to better reflect its role and purpose and explained the format of the meeting.

2. Briardale Centre, Blyth

Jean Bell from the Briardale Centre spoke about the New Roots Social Enterprise project. She explained that over the past 16 years at Briardale they had developed an environmental project including orchard, greenhouses and poly tunnels and set up a wood shop for producing garden products etc. Various grants have been received over the years that have enabled the Briardale Centre to develop the project. The project provides employment for ex-offenders, probation clients. Funding had been received to set up a shop on the site and expand the growing area and a gardener and wood worker on work placements have helped to move the project forward. Over the last few months they have been busy building a shop for selling goods but have been adversely affected by the weather in terms of being able to complete on time. This has not been helped by conflicting information with regards to planning permission requirements. The shop will provide training opportunities and is looking to provide courses for young people and arts and crafts with children in the summer. They have a new greenhouse and electricity installed to enable growing year round. The Centre receives fruit and vegetables from Morrisons that would otherwise go to landfill. The success of the project has been down to the people involved where a good relationship exists and updating all the time. Whilst products can be obtained online prefer people to come on site. Contact: enquiries@briardale.org.uk for further information.

3. Tesco Bags of Help Scheme

Kay Bradshaw from Groundwork Northumberland talked about the Tesco Bags of Help scheme and funding available based on the 5p levy on plastic bags which is available for 3 years. Applications are through Groundwork UK and focused on improving green spaces and making a physical improvement. There has to be a physical outcome. 10% of the fund can be spent on revenue. 10% -20% can be matched funding but Tesco want to be the main funder. Further details at:- www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/tescocommunityscheme.

£30,000 is available twice a year for 3 awards in each district of Hexham, Amble and Berwick. Application process is online. Next round opens on 18th April and ends 3rd June. Each of the three projects selected will receive between £8,000 and £12,000 based on public vote at the district Tesco store. Kay indicated that she could support

people with applications. It is possible to reapply if you are unsuccessful the first time.

4. VCS Assembly

Ann Atkinson, Northumberland CVA thanked organisations that had responded to the survey sent out by Northumberland County Council in January in relation to the Northumberland CVA commission to provide support services to the VCS and plans for the next two years. She outlined the key areas of work for the forthcoming year.

- Funding Advice including 3 funding fairs – a funding fair has been arranged for 19th May at Wylam Institute
- Support and training for trustees
- Supported volunteering activity including volunteer coordinator support events.
- Continuing support for the VCS Assembly
- Corporate social responsibility development
- Attendance at annual town and parish council events

AA stated that there were three places available on the Executive Committee to represent Infrastructure, Employability and Skills and West Northumberland and asked attendees to let her know if they were interested and wanted more information

AA stated that the Assembly were pushing to get a place on the Health and Well Being Board and for increased collaboration with the CCG. KB indicated that Groundwork had done a lot of work in relation to health and well-being which had been commissioned by CCG's in other area and asked whether the CCG were ever going to commission anything in Northumberland. Discussion focused on the importance of showing the value of the sector, what we are doing and what impact we have. The difficulties of no standard way of measurement was raised, how we show our social value and identifying tools to help us do that. It was stated that if we weren't here our loss would be felt.

The VCS Assembly were represented on the Refugee and Asylum Seeker multi agency working group led by Northumberland County Council to develop the offer for Syrian refugees to be placed in the county. A report for approval would go to committee in June and if agreed Syrian refugees would be likely to be received in the autumn.

The VCS Assembly were also involved in keeping up to date with developments in relation to the Devolution agenda in terms of impact on the sector.

5. Update on the Tall Ships

Martin Conway, Northumberland CVA explained how the Tall Ships was an international event providing a spotlight on Northumberland and he was involved in developments looking into how the VCS could provide added value. Interest had been in the Arts and Heritage theme and a proposal had been put forward to compliment the volunteering programme led by Active Northumberland and enhance it by providing an event qualification and also considering what the volunteers can do

when the event is over. This will require training and employability organisations to get together in September to consider opportunities for volunteers. An Arts trail is planned for Blyth led by Headway Arts, a Blyth Carnival and performance stage in the market place.

Also planned is a community village in Blyth market square. Expressions of interest in having a stall over the 3 day period are required at a cost of £25 per stall. The aim is to encourage repeat visits to the area to contribute to the economic and social development of the area. Karen Walker, Blyth Town Team is leading on this, email: karen@theblythdevelopmenttrust.org

Newbiggin by the Sea is holding a fringe festival with events and so is Seaton Sluice so it is a coastal event rather than just being Blyth based. From June onwards the Festival of the Coast is being promoted by Active Northumberland. If you are running any events between 1st June and 30th September 2016 these can be put on the Visit Northumberland website so that additional PR can be provided for the event, email: admin@northumberlandtourism.co.uk to register events.

6. Information Sharing

Healthwatch reported that information for people with a learning disability had been produced so easy to read. An advocacy service was provided to assist with complaints. She encouraged attendees to ensure issues and concerns re health and social care were specified on feedback forms as all considered, reported and taken forward. Contact Anna McClure email:- annam@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

Tom Roll stated that The Golden Age Forum meets monthly at Northumberland CVA and were interested in opportunities for visits or people to give talks. Responses included opportunity to visit the Briardale Centre and project and talk by the Miners Memorial Meadows Project linked with Woodhorn. For further information about the Forum email - ThomasYERoll@aol.com

Talent Match, youth unemployment initiative supports 18-24 year olds back into work. £3,500 available for 26 weeks for organisations to take youngsters on. Talent Match projects are led by a cross-sector partnership with a key focus on employers, , to ensure that it meets local needs and young people are given opportunities get the skills to find employment. For further information contact the Wise Group. Email: Dianne.Watson@thewisegroup.co.uk Employment Advisor/Youth Coach

Mind Active are involved in providing activities across 45 residential homes in the North East. Next Thursday holding a Royal Tea Party. Also provide support to carers and people with dementia in their own homes. Contact Stephen Ward email: mindactive@tiscali.co.uk

7. Close

RJ thanked everyone for attending and for contributions to the meeting.

The new layout for the meeting was considered to be more conducive to information sharing and a light lunch followed providing more networking opportunities.