



Better for everyone

Weardale
Action Partnership
Annual Report

2023/24

Introduction



Councillor Elizabeth Scott

Portfolio Holder Statement

As the Cabinet portfolio holder for Economy and Partnerships I am proud to say that the Area Action Partnerships fall within my remit.

AAPs have been supporting work in local communities for 15 years now. Funding has helped to sustain and develop numerous local organisations right across County Durham. Nearly £30m has been allocated through Area Budget grants since AAPs were created back in 2009 supporting nearly 3000 different applications.

The 14 AAPs cover the whole of the county, each with effective boards of 21 people which are made partners, public, councillors and agencies. The Boards work on their specific priorities that reflect the needs of the county's varied localities. Over the last year they have again allocated nearly £2M which has supported over 190 local projects.

Fellow County Councillors and I are very grateful for the support we get from the AAPs in allocating our Neighbourhood Budget. This is funding every councillor gets to support good causes and projects in the areas we represent. Since 2009 over £37m has been allocated through nearly 8000 different applications. You can imagine the difference funding via the AAPs and Councillors has made to our towns, villages and city. This year councillors have supported well over 600 projects with over £2.4M of funding.

At a time when communities and families are having to deal with ongoing financial pressures AAPs have been able to help those organisations who are helping others. The strength of the voluntary and community centre in County Durham never fails to amaze me.

I do want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who gives up their time and volunteers with local organisations. Be that with sports clubs, management committees at community centres, environmental schemes

or those people who volunteer on AAP Boards. County Durham would be a poorer place without you. However volunteering has to be supported and it's a key area that AAPs help with in terms of supporting groups with volunteer management, training and support.

There is no doubt that community organisations are struggling through the ongoing cost of living crisis so if you have ever thought about volunteering now could be the time. Local organisations give so much to their communities and they do need our help.

Since 2009 AAPs have been a feature of our communities but change is ahead. Last year the council concluded a review of its community engagement activities which included the AAPs. The outcomes of this review are now being implemented and this is going to lead to enhancements in 2025 with AAPs being replaced by new 'Local Networks'. The Local Networks will continue to bring local people, councillors and organisations together building on the legacy of the AAPs with the aim of broadening the reach within communities and developing Local Network Plans setting out the longer-term aspirations for our many towns and villages. Over the coming months we will keep people updated as we develop Local Network structures.

Prior to the launch of Local Networks in 2025, AAPs will continue to deliver over the next year which will only be possible with the hard work of all involved. So a big thank you from me to fellow councillors, AAP Board members, partner organisations, members of the public and the AAP staff. I look forward to continuing to work with you all over the next 12 months.

Councillor Elizabeth Scott,

Cabinet portfolio holder for Economy and Partnerships.

Weardale Action Partnership 2023/24 Key Information



FUNDING

£98,047

of AAP Area Budget funding allocated to 9 projects

£33,290

of Area Budget match funding generated

£21,455

of County Councillor Neighbourhood Budget funding allocated to 4 local projects

4 Neighbourhood Budget Small Grants awarded to local groups receiving a total of

£945

£600

of Coronation Fund Budget awarded to 3 local groups



COMMUNICATION

980

local residents regularly receiving information via e-bulletins



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

WAP Team attended all three agricultural shows in Weardale, meeting residents and visitors to discover what really matters to people and how we can work together to improve Weardale for future generations.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The WAP team has worked with community groups and buildings throughout Weardale, supporting and encouraging them with their aims to provide help and assistance within the local community.

Strengthening these groups is key to longstanding sustainability within rural areas. The WAP team have brought training providers into Weardale to deliver courses crucial to small community groups such as Food Hygiene and Emergency First Aid. The WAP team have also helped small groups to build their confidence as they develop into larger constituted groups with a bigger remit and capability.



Weardale Area Action Partnership

Established in 2009, Weardale Action Partnership brings together local people and partners to take action on local issues. The area ranges from Edmundbyers at our most Northern point, over to Killhope in the west and follows the A689 through the Dale to Witton-le-Wear in the East covering a number of small towns and villages which make up our rural AAP area in Weardale.

Over the past year, we have continued to focus on projects which strengthen local communities. All projects supported help in some way to build community cohesion, bolster community driven projects and increase the services and activities available to the residents of Weardale.

Welcome from the Chair

Richard Lawrie, Public Representative



Serving for the last year as Chair of the Weardale Action Partnership has been a huge privilege, and I am proud of all the hard work that it does to improve and develop our area: our local communities and organisations benefit greatly from having the Weardale Action Partnership embedded in the local community, and the work that goes on (much of it behind the scenes) makes a real difference to people's lives.

Over the last 12 months, we have developed and supported a range of projects to benefit local communities and provided the necessary funding to make these a success. This has involved the Area Action Partnership team of Angelina, Tracy, and Fiona, working closely with local individuals and groups all over Weardale, and their local knowledge and dedication is something that we all benefit from. I know too that because of this a great many local people value having them in Weardale, so I would like to thank them for everything that they do.

A number of these projects are ongoing, and the Area Action Partnership Board look forward to watching these develop, as well as helping in shaping new projects that come forward. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Anita Savory and Damian Pearson, who have served as Vice Chairs of the Area Action Partnership this year, and who are diligent in their support for the Area Action Partnership and its work in the local community. I know too that the members of the Area Action Partnership Board have worked hard and freely given their time to consider and deliberate the many applications that we receive, as well as visit projects, so I would also like to thank them for their work this year, and for the knowledge and experience that they bring to the Area Action Partnership.

All of those who actively contribute to the Weardale Area Action Partnership are keen to work with others in supporting and improving life for people in Weardale, which is very important for all of us, and I hope this work will continue for many years into the future.

Our People

Anyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in the area can get involved with the Area Action Partnership. We currently have almost 1,000 people who are part of our wider Forum who receive regular updates and e-bulletins and who are invited to get involved in the work of the AAP.

Our Board is the decision-making body of the AAP. It is made up of local people, elected councillors and representatives from partner organisations. Our current board members are:

Cllr Anita Savory
Cllr John Shuttleworth
Cllr Olive Wilson (Witton-le-Wear Parish Council)
Cllr David Sugden (Wolsingham Parish Council)
Cllr Helen Barrass (Muggleswick Parish Council)
Cllr Joan Carrick (Stanhope Parish Council)
Vacancy

Richard Lawrie (Public Representative) (Chair)
Kevin Roddam (Public Representative)
Adrian Holden (Public Representative)
Will Wearmouth (Public Representative)
Alison Humble (Public Representative)
Caroline Ford (Public Representative)
Stephen Thomas (Public Representative)

Damian Pearson (Believe Housing)
Dan Wootton (Fire and Rescue Service)
Insp. Ed Turner (Durham Constabulary)
Julian Haynes (Voluntary and Community Sector)
Michael Laing / Michael Kelleher (Durham County Council)
Jeff Bell (Business Representative)
Sarah Lee (Health)

We would like to express our thanks to Angela Hawkes of Stanhope Parish Council who stood down from the Board earlier this year.

2023/24 Funding Allocation

Area Budget
£2,485 – Weardale Together CIC – Youth Sessions
£10,000 – NorthPens – Weardale WordFest
£5,000 – Close Knit Community – Close Knit Community 2023/24
£17,932 – Citizen Songwriters – The Story Train
£18,500 – St Thomas' Church Hall – Update to Resources
£13,000 – Witton-le-Wear Youth Club – Youth Club April 2024 – July 2025
£9,635 – Citizens Advice County Durham – Weardale Income Maximisation Project
£11,495 – Durham County Council – Lydgate Lane signage
£10,000 – Wolsingham Wayfarers – Wolsingham Wayfarers 2024/25
Welfare Reform
£10,000 – Citizens Advice County Durham – Weardale Income Maximisation Project
Youth Fund
£9,902 – Weardale Together CIC – Youth Sessions

Neighbourhood Budget
Cllr Anita Savory
£1,400 – The St Thomas Centre - Tables
£1,000 – Durham County Council – 2x Frosterley Seating Area Improvements
£16,055 – Durham County Council – Lydgate Lane signage
Small Grants Fund
£150 – Eastgate Sheep Show – Eastgate Sheep Show
£795 – Wolsingham Parish Council – Marquee for Summer Event
Coronation Fund
£300 – Wolsingham Parish Council – Summer Concert
Cllr John Shuttleworth
£1,000 – Durham County Council – 2x Frosterley Seating Area Improvements
£2,000 – Edmundbyers Village Hall – Edmundbyers Village Hall Windows
Small Grants Fund
£200 – Cowshill Domino Club - Running Costs
£200 – Wearhead Bowls Club – Running Costs
Coronation Fund
£150 – Rookhope Village Hall – Coronation Lunch Event
£150 – Barrington Bites – Coronation Lunch Event



Frosterley Seating Area Improvements



Witton-le Wear Youth Club - Mad Hatter Tea Party - Fun & Food

Neighbourhood Budget is an allocation of £19,400 that each County Councillor gets each year to spend on Community Projects. The process is supported by the AAP team. Councillors also received an additional £300 to give to community events taking place to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III.

The Difference We Have Made Area Budget

With an overall Area Budget (AB) of £100,000, 9 different projects have successfully applied to the Weardale Action Partnership for funding this year. WAP also manages two other funding streams – Youth Fund (YF) and Welfare Reform (WR) funding. To maximise the effectiveness of projects, Area Budget funding is sometimes combined with these additional funding pots to ensure value for money and that as many people are helped as possible.



Linda Pearson, Rural Advice Worker

NorthPens Weardale WordFest £10,000 (AB)

Weardale WordFest began in 2018 and has taken place every year since then. A locally based literature festival, WordFest aims to celebrate the wealth of creative talent in Weardale. It is designed to be an inclusive live event - both a cultural experience and social occasion encouraging community cohesion and addressing rural isolation.

A programme of free writing workshops led by professional writers is held in various locations throughout Weardale culminating in a weekend event in October with talks, workshops, discussions and exhibitions in Stanhope.

Weardale Together CIC Youth Sessions £12,387 (AB & YF)

Weardale Together CIC applied for funding to continue their weekly Youth Activity Sessions for ages 8-16 in St Thomas' Church Hall, Stanhope. Each 2-hour session is led by two experienced youth leaders and include board games, physical games, snack time and a time when the young people are encouraged to come together to shape and steer the sessions.

Guided by the model of 'ladder of participation', staff will support the young people to gradually increase their skills and confidence to take over more and more aspects of the youth group themselves and to design activities and sessions.

Citizens Advice County Durham Weardale Income Maximisation Project Community Recovery and Resilience £19,635 (AB & WR)

Weardale has benefitted from a dedicated Citizens Advice worker for a number of years. Funding from both the Welfare Reform and Area budgets will secure the employment of an advice worker for 18.5 hours per week for a further 12 months.

The advice worker provides free, confidential and impartial advice to Weardale residents on issues including benefits, debt, employment, family/ relationships.

The adviser will deliver this service via home visits and telephone advice, depending on the client need and will be supported to maximise their income through benefits advice/reducing wasted expenditure and engaging with debt advice, mitigating against income losses, aiding recovery and improved health and wellbeing.

The Difference We Have Made Towns & Villages

In 2021, AAPs were allocated £210,000 of funding to deliver projects designed to revitalise and enhance towns and villages in County Durham. Over the past three years, the Weardale Action Partnership Board have considered 11 projects put forward for funding from our Towns and Villages fund. The funding has now been fully allocated to six projects.



Ashcroft Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)

Ashcroft MUGA was installed around 20 years ago and had fallen into disrepair. Working alongside Stanhope Parish Council, an application was made to resurface the MUGA at Ashcroft in Stanhope. New lines were painted to enable users to play a variety of different games and new LED floodlights were also installed to ensure the area could be used for longer hours. The facility is now back in use and members of the local community are delighted with the upgrade.



Killhope Interpretation £27,000

Killhope Museum successfully applied for £27,000 of funding to create a sensory experience through the delivery of a fully mechanised Jigger House and the process involved in the search for Galena. The Jigger house has not been fully operational for many years and will add great atmosphere to the far end of the site drawing in visitors who would not ordinarily see a fully interpreted and fully operational Jigger House.

The underground and Lodging Shop mannequins will also be upgraded to be more robust, durable and lifelike. Additionally, written interpretation panels will enhance the information in the underground mine tours.



Muggleswick Church Camping £50,000

Muggleswick All Saints Church submitted an application for funding to deliver modernisation and energy efficiency works to enable the church building to become the first church in the Northeast of England to become a Church camping venue.

Muggleswick All Saints Church is mid-way on 'The Way of Light', a 45 mile long-distance walking route produced in 2022 by Visit Durham. It is also on the 'Roof of England Walk' - a circular route being developed by the North Pennines AONB. It is hoped that the provision of a Church camping venue will increase tourism and enable the church to be more sustainable and retain its useful place in the community.

The Difference We Have Made Fun & Food

Weardale Action Partnership and Durham County Council's Fun & Food team delivered a variety of activities with a free meal during school holidays. Part-funding is provided by the Department of Education and projects provide a service to children who are eligible for free school meals. Almost £25,000 was allocated to projects over the last year.



Rookhope Village Hall £1,935

Volunteers came together in Rookhope Village Hall to deliver a Christmas activity for children. Children made Christmas crackers, wreaths and decorations as well as taking part in other seasonal crafting activities. The children also took part in more physical activities as well as participating in traditional party games such as pass the parcel. The group also delivered a similar session in May half term.

The same volunteers also delivered a craft and physical activity session in St Thomas' Church Hall in Stanhope. It also included food related activities to encourage a healthy start to the New Year. Children made a calendar for 2024 and participated in other craft activities. There was a games area in the large hall which included larger play resources as well as board games.

Citizen Songwriters £7,053

Weardale Action Partnership supported The Story Train to deliver Fun & Food activities during the Easter and Summer holidays this year. An arts-based activity was provided each Wednesday during the summer holidays which included sessions with a puppeteer, songwriters and filmmakers. A free healthy meal was provided which consisted of a healthy sandwich, salad and fruit bag in a packed lunch box.

Some of the sessions included a free return journey on the Weardale Railway for children and their parents. The children worked together to produce a song entitled 'All Aboard' which they filmed themselves performing at various locations on the railway.

Witton-le-Wear Youth Club £10,742

Witton-le-Wear Youth Club continued to hold Fun & Food activities this year. With sessions taking place during the Easter and Summer holidays as well as during half-terms there was always plenty to do for children in Witton-le-Wear and the surrounding area. Activities consisted of a mixture of arts and crafts, sports and the opportunity to travel to venues such as the beach, Jump 360 or Beamish. Free healthy lunches were provided at all sessions.

Front cover image: Fishing boats on Tunstall reservoir.



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