



Ray Wind Farm Community Fund Community Profile Report

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Introduction

This report was commissioned by Vattenfall and has been produced by Community Action Northumberland (CAN), as part of the work leading up to the opening of the Ray Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund.

At the time of writing the construction of the 16 turbine Ray Wind Farm is well underway, and the site is due to start generating green energy in early 2017. Vattenfall, the operating company, has pledged an index linked annual investment of over £250,000 to set up a local Community Fund for the lifetime of the wind farm. It is anticipated that the site will remain operational for 20 years which would result in a total community investment of over £5 million. The fund will be overseen by a panel of local community representatives, tasked with ensuring that the fund is used to provide the greatest possible benefit for residents and businesses within the area of benefit.

The aim of this report is to support local people to create a vision for the area of benefit and to identify priorities for the use of the funds. It sets out the findings of research carried out over a 12-month period between October 2015 and September 2016.

As the Rural Community Council of Northumberland, CAN is ideally suited to carry out this work. We have been promoting community development across Northumberland since 1951: enabling a wide range of community and voluntary organisations; supporting individuals through the introduction of new projects to address gaps in rural services; and promoting rural issues such as affordable housing, community transport, rural services, rural economy, health and social welfare, needs of older people, needs of young people and children, broadband and digital inclusion, environment and green issues, and rural poverty to name but a few. We have a depth of knowledge about the county and a wide ranging network of local contacts in the voluntary, statutory and commercial sectors.

Methodology

In compiling this report CAN undertook a wide range of research to provide a clear and accurate picture of the local area and of the issues of concern to local people. This involved both collecting data from existing sources, and carrying out detailed consultations with local stakeholders.

The first challenge in carrying out the work was deciding how wide a geographical area should be covered, especially given that one of the expected outcomes of the exercise was to help decide how the Area of Benefit should be defined. Vattenfall had sent out information regarding the construction of the wind farm to the 2090 households and businesses located within a 10 km radius of the site and it was decided that for the sake of consistency, direct consultations should be carried out with this same catchment group.

However, the 10 km radius does not fit neatly with any political areas (e.g. civic parishes, wards or parliamentary constituencies) for which statistical evidence is readily available. Therefore, in order to achieve the closest possible match, statistics were compiled for the 14 civic parishes which have a significant land mass within this boundary: namely Bavington, Bellingham, Birtley, Capheaton, Chollerton, Corsenside, Elsdon, Hepple, Hollinghill, Kirkwhelpington, Otterburn, Rothley, Wallington Demesne and Whittington. The total number of households included in the statistical analysis of the area is therefore somewhat higher than the number included in the consultations – a total of 2777.

(A further four civic parishes: Matfen, Netherwitton, Nunnykirk and Wark have tiny areas of land within the 10 km radius, but it was felt that these were so small that including statistics for these parishes would skew the evidence to an inappropriate level.)

A wide range of research methods were used to gather evidence for this report, including:

1. A Consultation Event in November 2015

This drop-in event was jointly hosted by Vattenfall and CAN, and the format based on best practice in community consultation as identified in the ACRE Community Led Planning Toolkit and Planning For Real Resources¹. Views were sought on a number of key themes, namely:

- Work, Training and the Local Economy

- Local Environment
- Health and Social Welfare
- Leisure and Recreation
- Community Facilities
- Traffic and Transport
- Housing
- Other

Displays were set up with innovative case studies of community projects from across Northumberland under each of these themes to stimulate ideas. People were given the opportunity to express their concerns as related to these themes by placing pre-printed idea cards on the table, writing comments of their own on post it notes, or by talking to staff and volunteers. All the ideas were then collated and analysed. Approximately 90 people attended the event and more than 250 comments were recorded.

2. A Community Survey

In February, a detailed survey was sent out to the 2090 households and businesses lying within a 10km radius of the wind farm. An additional 10 were requested by second members of households, and voluntary groups with no separate postal address. Respondents were supplied with stamped addressed envelopes to respond and also had the option to complete the survey online. The survey asked for views on a range of themes which had been refined from those used at the consultation event to reflect data collected there.

These were:

- General Infrastructure;
- Work, Education & the Economy;
- Community Facilities;
- Housing;
- Health & Leisure;
- Natural Environment;
- Other.

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the ideas coming from the drop in event and to develop their own ideas and comments. A total of 269 responses were received – (a response rate of 13%) - representing a wide range of local people and businesses, with the exception being a low response rate from people under the age of 29.

3. Focused consultations with Young People in the Area.

General meetings and household surveys have limited impact in gathering the views of children and young people and it was therefore decided to carry out some focused work with these age groups. Working with children through local schools was not a practical option as the area spans the catchments for six first schools, five middle schools and four high schools, most of which are also attended by children from a much wider area. Work with younger people therefore focused on linking with community groups: namely Otterburn Youth Club, Kirkwhelpington Youth Club, and Cambo Young Farmers. A youth survey was developed which was used as a basis for discussion at group meetings, and could be sent out to any young people interested in participating, who did not attend the groups or were not present for our meetings.

4. Analysing Statistical Data.

Information from the 2011 Census and other sources was accessed via Northumberland County Council's Parish Profilesⁱⁱ and ACRE's Rural Evidence Reportsⁱⁱⁱ for each of the Civic Parishes.

5. Policy Information and Views from Local Statutory Agencies.

Information was gathered by referring to relevant website sections and policy documents from statutory agencies, primarily Northumberland County Council (NCC) but also Northumberland National Park, Northumbria Police, Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group and others. Policy officers at Northumberland County Council (NCC) and Northumberland National Park, and various members of Staff at CAN also helped by providing up to date comments on their work and relevant data.

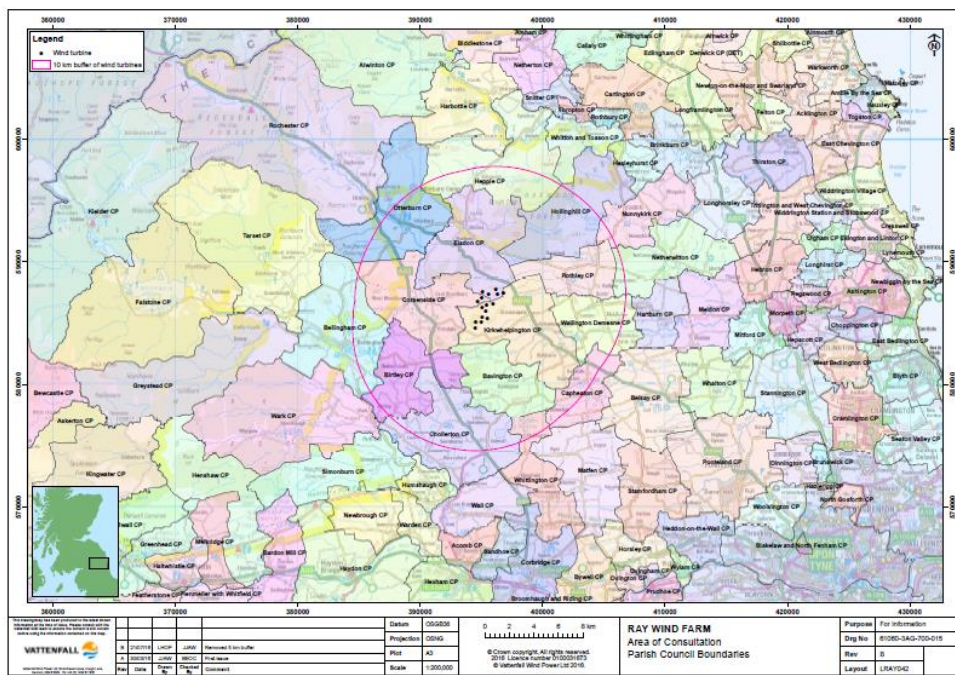
6. Recording Views Expressed to CAN and Vattenfall Staff by Email, Phone Call or Informal Conversations at Other Meetings.

The findings of the research are set out below. It would be impossible to reflect every individual comment that came out of the exercise, so the findings have been presented under the main themes emerging from the consultations.

Within each theme the report:

- Compiles the views gathered from all engagement with the community
- Provides factual evidence to balance the perceived situation
- Refers to any local regional and national policy matters and other sources of available funding that may have an impact in the locality and influence the way in which the local community might approach the issues raised

Brief Overview of the Local Area



The Ray Wind Farm is located in a rurally isolated area of Northumberland consisting mainly of farmland and forested areas. The South East part of the patch is characterised by relatively low-lying farmland with relatively good access to some of Northumberland’s main towns i.e. Hexham, Ponteland and Morpeth. The North and West of the area, lies in part within Northumberland National Park and is made up of remote moorlands and the foot hills of the Cheviots.

The relationship with The National Park Authority <http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/> is important across the area. The authority is tasked with the conservation and enhancement of the protected history, wildlife and landscapes of the Park, and with promoting the enjoyment and understanding of its special qualities. It is the statutory planning authority for the area and has responsibility for controlling the use of land and buildings within its boundaries. It also recognises that to achieve its aims it is essential to work with local communities, businesses and individuals to achieve a living working landscape, both within the boundaries and in neighbouring areas which have an impact on the Park itself. It has therefore established wider ‘Action Areas’ within which it seeks to influence development.

The parishes of Bellingham, Elsdon, Hepple, and Otterburn lie within the Park Boundaries, whilst Birtley, Corsenside, Kirkwhelpington, Rothley and Wark are within the Park’s wider action areas. Whilst this imposes some limitations – for instance in terms of spatial planning, it also affords opportunities to the area in terms of greater potential to develop tourism and access to some small pots of funding.

Another significant influence in the North of the area is the presence of the Otterburn Camp and Otterburn Training Area, which was established as an artillery range in 1911 and is owned by the Ministry of Defence. The training area covers some 58,000 acres including land in Elsdon, Otterburn and Hepple parishes. The area continues to be one of the MOD's main sites within the UK for military training but is also managed to support farming and forestry, and to provide public access for recreational purposes. The MOD co-operates with the National Park to conserve the environment, wildlife, and sites of historical importance in the area.

Bellingham is the only Parish in the area with a population of over 1,000 people and Bellingham Village is the largest settlement; the only one offering a significant number of facilities such as a range of shops, banks, a middle school, fire station, GP Surgery, etc. The rest of the population is spread across numerous smaller villages, hamlets and outlying farms.

The average population density of the 14 parishes closest to the Wind Farm is just 7.8 residents per km² compared to a National average of 406.9 per km². There are a total of 2777 household spaces of which, 8.8% (245) are unoccupied. This is more than double the national average percentage of empty households. The total population of this area is 5806 and the age profile is significantly older than average for the country, with 21% of the population being over the age of 64 compared with 16.3% nationally, and just 15% being under the age of 16, compared to 18.9% nationally. These figures reflect that this beautiful and peaceful part area is attractive to second home owners, and those looking to retire to the country, whilst younger families are less likely to move here due to a lack of affordable housing and employment opportunities.

The area spans the borders of political and administrative areas as follows:

- The West and North areas of Northumberland (Northumberland County Council <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/> has established three area committees to allow the public to have more of a say in council affairs)
- Two Parliamentary Constituencies: Berwick upon Tweed and Hexham
- The local council wards of Bellingham, Humshaugh, Longhorsley, and Rothbury
- Two planning authorities: Northumberland County Council and Northumberland National Park, four of the 32 'planning areas' and four of the 37 'housing areas' designated by NCC
- Catchment areas for six primary schools, five middle schools and four high schools.

More detailed information about the area is given under each of the themes below.

Findings

Achieving Best Value

The survey gave people the opportunity to discuss some general principles as to how the fund should be spent to provide best value for the community, and this section discusses the feedback generated.

Geographical Area over which the Fund should be Spent

As a starting point, the questionnaire proposed 3 potential definitions of the area of benefit – the area within a 5km radius of the site, a 10km radius of the site, or county wide. Respondents were also given the opportunity to propose their own way of defining the area. 10.6% of respondents supported the 5km radius, 68.7% supported a 10km radius and 23.8% County wide.

Thirty people proposed other options such as setting different radii, having banded areas – with the most local projects being given higher priority, or exploring ways of ensuring those most in need would benefit. However, no one alternative proposal received a significant level of support.

Comments indicated two particular concerns:

- that the fund should be used to benefit those most affected by the wind farm, although there were several different ways of defining who that would be (i.e. those living closest to the site, those who could see the site, those affected by works and road closures).
- that the area immediately around the wind farm is very sparsely populated and it might be difficult to find a meaningful use for the money if the area of benefit is too restricted.

It was also suggested that people living close to the site might benefit significantly from wider projects (e.g. to improve tourism in the county or to support schools located outside the immediate area which are attended by local children) and that boundaries should be flexible to accommodate such initiatives.

Types of Spending to be considered

Respondents were asked to rank five spending options that could be supported through the fund. The responses were analysed using the tools available within Survey Monkey (the well-recognised on-line survey tool). The consensus of the community was that grants for local community groups should be given the highest priority, closely followed by larger scale community initiatives to benefit the whole community. Grants for businesses were a lower priority whilst grants to individuals were lowest priority by a significant margin. The middle place in the ranking was taken by the proposition that a mixture of all of these types of options should be accommodated.

Comments on Achieving Best Value

Throughout the consultations a significant number of comments were received regarding the importance of ensuring that the Community derives the maximum possible value from the fund. These included:

- Ensuring that the fund is not used to subsidise statutory provision
- Ensuring that the fund is used in a way that complements other funding sources.

There are a number of other funds of varying size and purposes which are currently available on a very local level including Northumberland Uplands Leader Programme, National Park Small Grants Scheme, Green Rigg Wind Farm Community Fund, Wingates Wind Farm Community Fund, funds associated with local quarries, and various small grant schemes held by the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland.

There are also numerous funds that are available over much wider geographical areas, many of which will part fund large projects where matched funding has been identified. The steering group may wish to develop a policy on how to ensure that grants are used to lever funding into the area from such sources.

- Considering investing some of the income to ensure a longer term legacy from the fund beyond the life of the wind farm.

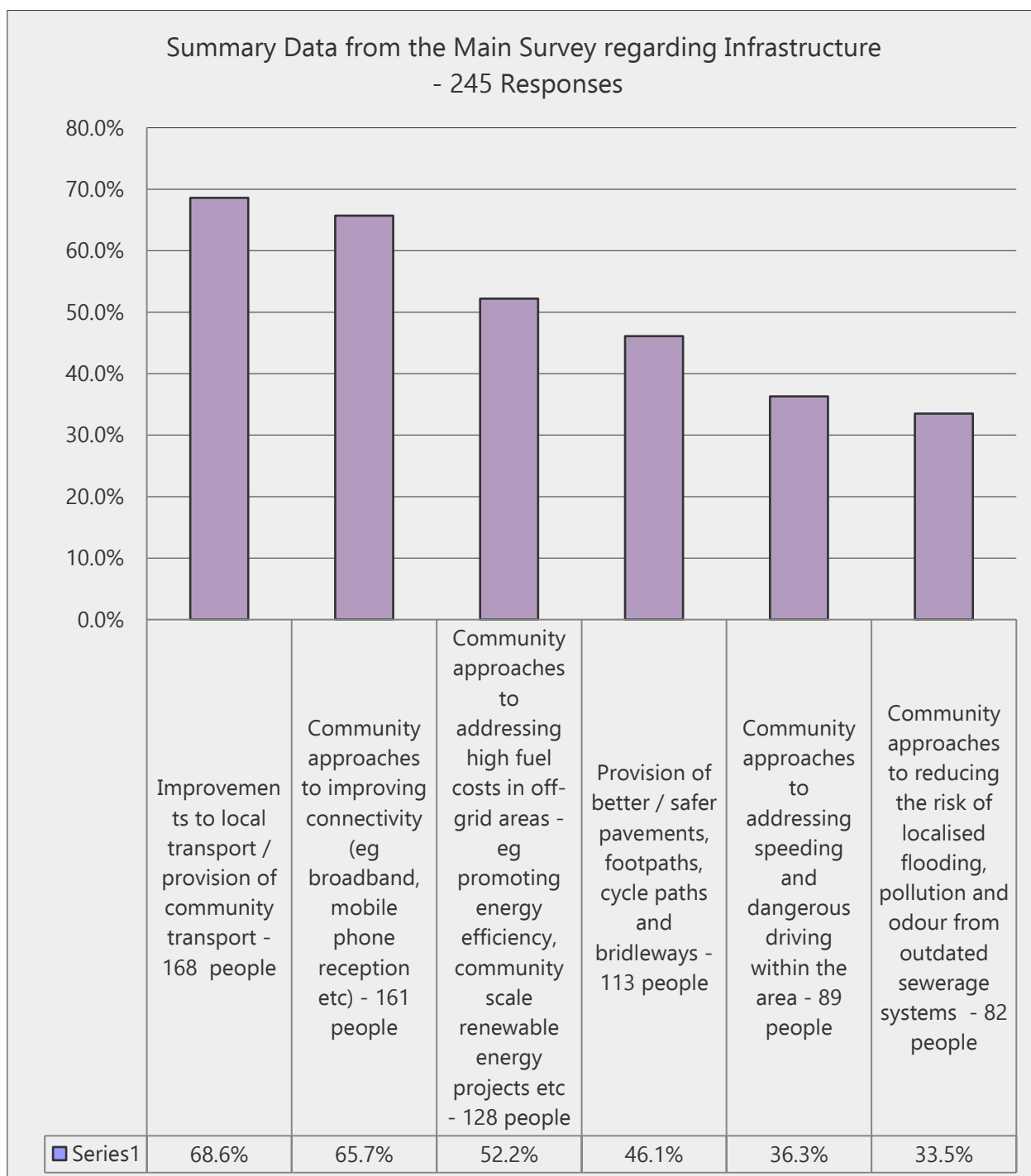
This idea emerged through the main survey and proved a popular theme at the interviews for members of the steering group.

- Some suggestions were made regarding how community wide projects might be managed.

It was noted that there is currently no local organisation that has a remit for the whole area or the capacity to manage larger scale initiatives. One person suggested employing a development worker for the area, and another provided a quite detailed proposal for creating a Community Development Trust.

- Several people commented that care should be taken that any projects funded are realistic, viable and are well managed and that a robust assessment process must be put in place for grant applications.

Infrastructure



Transport

Community Views

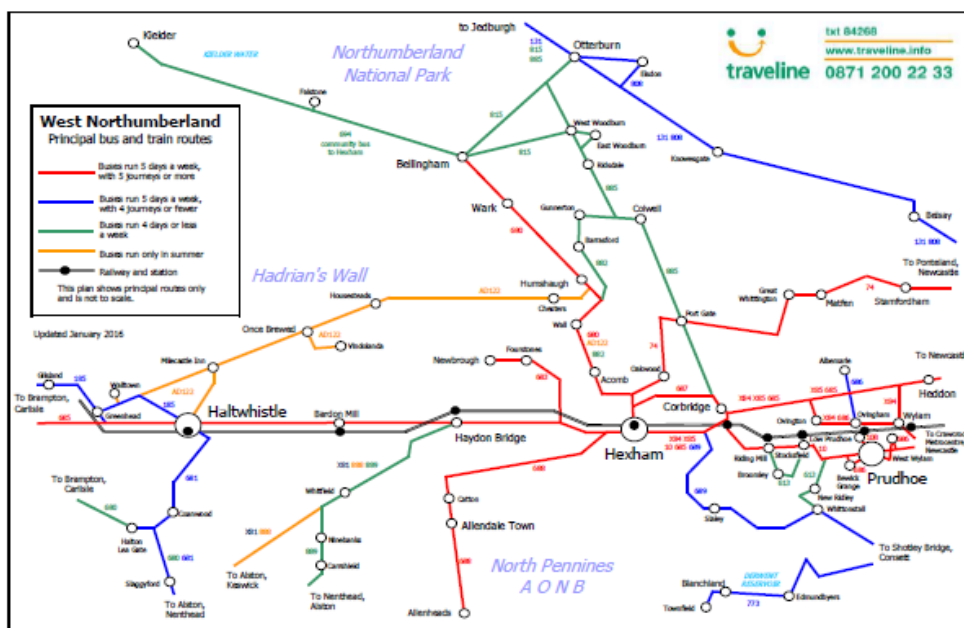
At the drop in event, seven comments were received regarding the need for improved bus services, ten suggesting that a community bus or minibus would be useful for the benefit of isolated older people, and youth groups. A further six specifically mentioned the need for better transport to access employment. One suggested enhancing existing community transport schemes such as those run by Adapt (North East) <http://www.adapt-ne.org.uk/> and Royal Voluntary Service Northumberland - <https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/hubs/1299-northumberland>.

As a result, views were sought in the general survey as to whether there is a need for improvements to local public / community transport. This issue was the highest ranked in the infrastructure section with 168 people or 68.6% of those responding on this section agreeing that this was an important issue. Additionally, patient transport services was the highest ranked issue under health and leisure, with 146 people indicating that better support is needed to enable people to attend GP and hospital appointments and for carers to visit loved ones in hospital.

Background Information

A cursory look at the statistics for the area would suggest that transport may not be as big an issue as these responses suggest as there are high levels of private ownership of vehicles. Only 9.4% of households have no car compared to a national average of 25.8%, and 42% of households have more than one car compared to 32.1% nationally. This high level of car ownership is a reflection of the rural nature of the area: residents need to travel much further than average to access services employment, education etc. and by and large expect to have to rely on privately owned transport. However, there will always be people who are unable to rely on cars including people with an illness or disability that prevents them driving (permanently or temporarily), teenagers who are too young to drive or to own a car themselves but who want independence from their parents, or those who are not the main driver in one car households. These people have fewer options than their urban counterparts as the sparse population and relatively low demand means that provision of comprehensive, cost effective public transport is not financially viable.

The map below, taken from NCC Website^{iv}, shows the main public transport routes across this part of Northumberland.



There are no train lines across the area, and only two A-roads: the A696 and A68 which connect to Tyneside and the South of the region respectively and merge towards the North of the patch to become the major route into Scotland. The map shows that local communities on or close to these two major routes benefit from timetabled bus services although those along the A68 run less than 5 days a week. Bellingham also benefits from services linking to these main routes and from a bus service running 5 days a week connecting to Hexham and thence to Tyneside. In addition, a new bus service has recently been introduced in the East of the area connecting Cambo and Scots Gap to Morpeth. However, many villages, hamlets and farms are a significant distance from any existing bus route.

Two community transport schemes also offer support in the area. Adapt (North East) is funded by NCC to run a dial-a-ride service for people who are unable to use public transport enabling those living in Cambo, Scots Gap and Capheaton to travel to Morpeth. Royal Voluntary Service Northumberland has for some time run a volunteer driving project in the area enabling disabled people to get out and about but funding for this service has recently been cut, and the future of the service may be uncertain.

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

Discussions with the National Park's Enterprise Officer indicated that transport is a perennial concern raised by communities and there were instances when a clear need had become apparent – (e.g. a women's training project running outreach sessions in the West of the Park found that a lack of transport was a significant barrier to women attending). However, they also felt that communities often perceive a need for better transport, which in practice proves to be insufficient to justify new services, for instance:

- five years ago the National Park supported one community to carry out a local needs analysis. However, the findings suggested a low level of need and the project did not progress.
- recently Spirit Buses, the Rothbury based bus operator, offered a service to Elsdon in response to an expressed need. However, this closed after a few months due to poor uptake.

NCC's Community Transport Officer expressed very similar points. Her role is to look at ways of addressing gaps in existing transport, working closely with communities to develop appropriate solutions. She stated that Communities often came to her for support with community transport issues having carried out inadequate research into the real nature and level of the need and that this is one major reason for initiatives failing. She advised that robust research should:

- include a detailed transport audit identifying what services already exist,
- explore whether there are good levels of awareness of existing services, (one respondent to the survey suggested provision of interactive bus timetables).
- ask people to indicate the likelihood that they would actually use a new service (as opposed to merely expressing an opinion as to whether one is needed),
- identify details of the types of journey that people wish to make e.g. the destinations, frequency, purpose, times of day and days of the week when they wish to travel
- consider a wide range of options to identify the best solution to meet identified need. (Many models are available including campaigning for new public routes, making adjustments to existing services, community owned minibuses, dial a ride schemes, volunteer driver schemes, wheels to work schemes, car sharing, community owned cars for low cost hire etc).

NCC can provide support to Communities wishing to find creative solutions to transport issues:

- A toolkit is available to help communities gather robust research to evidence need, and identify appropriate solutions. These could include commissioning additional public transport routes (if sufficient demand exists), adjusting existing routes, or developing an appropriate community scheme.
- The Community Transport Officer is available to provide additional support and advice
- The County Council is currently funding the Getabout Scheme <http://www.ca-north.org.uk/supporting-individuals/getabout-scheme> which aims to ensure access to transport for all. As part of the project Community Action Northumberland will be carrying out development work over the next 18 months with a number of pilot Communities to develop appropriate projects.

Mobile and Broadband Connectivity

Community Views

The theme of improved connectivity emerged at the drop in event, with 12 comments received spread across the themes of improving community facilities, supporting the economy, employment & training, and leisure & recreation. These included both concerns about poor mobile phone signals and lack of access to superfast broadband.

In addition, Vattenfall and CAN were both contacted at an early stage in the consultation process by local community groups that are campaigning to bring superfast broadband to their areas – notably communities at Ridsdale and in Rothley and Hollinghill. One specific suggestion was that, as Vattenfall has installed ducting and cables to bring superfast broadband to the wind farm, the communities closest to the ducting route may be able to link via this new infrastructure. This would involve working in partnership with BT

Openreach and iNorthumberland (NCC's programme responsible for delivering digital connectivity in the County). A similar approach has already been implemented at the Wingates Wind Farm Site.

As a result, views were sought in the general survey as to whether there is a need for community approaches to addressing connectivity in the area. This issue was the second highest ranked in the infrastructure section, coming in a close second behind transport. 161 people or 65.7% of those responding on this section agreed that the fund should consider supporting this issue. On the other hand – some felt strongly that broadband should be funded elsewhere. Most were happy with the services they receive, and those that didn't get fast broadband at home stated that they were 'able to find other ways of managing'.

Background Information

The last available data from Ofcom confirms that mobile signals in the area are poorer than average. In 2013 it was estimated that no reliable signal was available for 1.8% of households or 19.6% of the geographical area of Northumberland. A complicated range of maps are available on the Ofcom website^v showing the likely availability of voice calls, 3G and 4G services both indoors and outdoors, through different networks. These show that large parts of the area around Ray Wind Farm are unlikely to receive a full range of services.

iNorthumberland <http://www.inorthumberland.org.uk/> (a programme delivered by NCC as part of the Digital Northumberland Strategy) has been set a goal of linking 95% of properties in the county to superfast broadband by the end of 2017. However, they have confirmed that approximately 23% (618) of properties within the 14 parishes closest to the wind farm are amongst the 5% of Northumberland households that are expected to remain unconnected after phase 2 of the mainstream roll out. (See table below for details by parish).

	No of properties in parish	% of properties expected to receive superfast broadband (phase 1 + phase 2)	% of properties not expected to receive superfast broadband (phase 1 + phase 2)	No of properties expected not to have superfast broadband (phase 1 + phase 2)
Bavington	43	34.9	65.1	28
Bellingham	664	90.2	9.8	65
Birtley	95	11.6	88.4	84
Capheaton	74	33.8	66.2	49
Chollerton	398	66.1	33.9	135
Corsenside	282	88.3	11.7	33
Elsdon	128	96.1	3.9	5
Hepple	86	3.5	96.5	83
Hollinghill	39	0	100	39
Kirkwhelpington	204	72.1	27.9	57
Otterburn	317	87.4	12.6	40
Rothley	68	70.6	29.4	20
Wallington Demesne	194	52.1	47.9	93
Whittington	187	51.9	48.1	90
Total	2330	77	23	618

However, a Digital Economy Bill is also currently being considered in Parliament which could have a further impact on the roll out of broadband in rural areas.

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

Regardless of their targets, iNorthumberland are keen to see as many households as possible linked to high quality broadband, and officers at the project can help community led broadband initiatives by:

- Providing technical advice
- Facilitating negotiations with BT Openreach and other providers
- Providing funding: a pot of approx. £1.5 million is set aside for this purpose

The National Park also confirmed that they were aware of locations within their action areas which are unlikely to be connected to superfast broadband through mainstream provision and that they are working alongside iNorthumberland to look at other options for remote communities. Their current understanding is that satellite broadband will be the most viable option for many properties within their action areas. A community owned co-operative, Cybermoor <http://www.cybermoor.org/> already provides broadband services in some of the remotest areas of Northumberland originally focusing on Alston Moor. Cybermoor has recently been commissioned by iNorthumberland to research options in other parts of the county

Community projects may consider a range of options to provide broadband including satellite, 4G mobile technology, or community led wireless networks.

There is clearly potential for the Fund to have a significant impact across the area of benefit by supporting improved connectivity. However, this would not mean simply providing funding: significant knowledge and expertise is required to find the right solution. Some local people have expressed an opinion that funding broadband should be a statutory duty and that the fund should not subsidise this work. There may also be issues around deciding what is financially viable – e.g. should there be a maximum spend per household.

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Community Views

At the drop in event, 35 comments were received regarding energy efficiency across the themes of housing, community facilities and environment. Suggestions included:

- Considering community scale initiatives including biomass, small community owned wind turbines, or hydro projects, and bringing gas to off-grid villages.
- Introducing measures for individual households and community buildings such as installing solar panels or air / ground source heat pumps or improving energy efficiency by installing insulation, double glazing and draft proofing.
- Directly subsidising energy costs to nearby households

As a result, views were sought in the main survey as to whether there is a need for community approaches to address high fuel costs in off gas grid areas. This issue was the third highest ranked in the infrastructure section, with 128 people or 52.2% of respondents on this section supporting these aims. There were also several comments about the need to support a small number of households that are not connected to mains electricity,

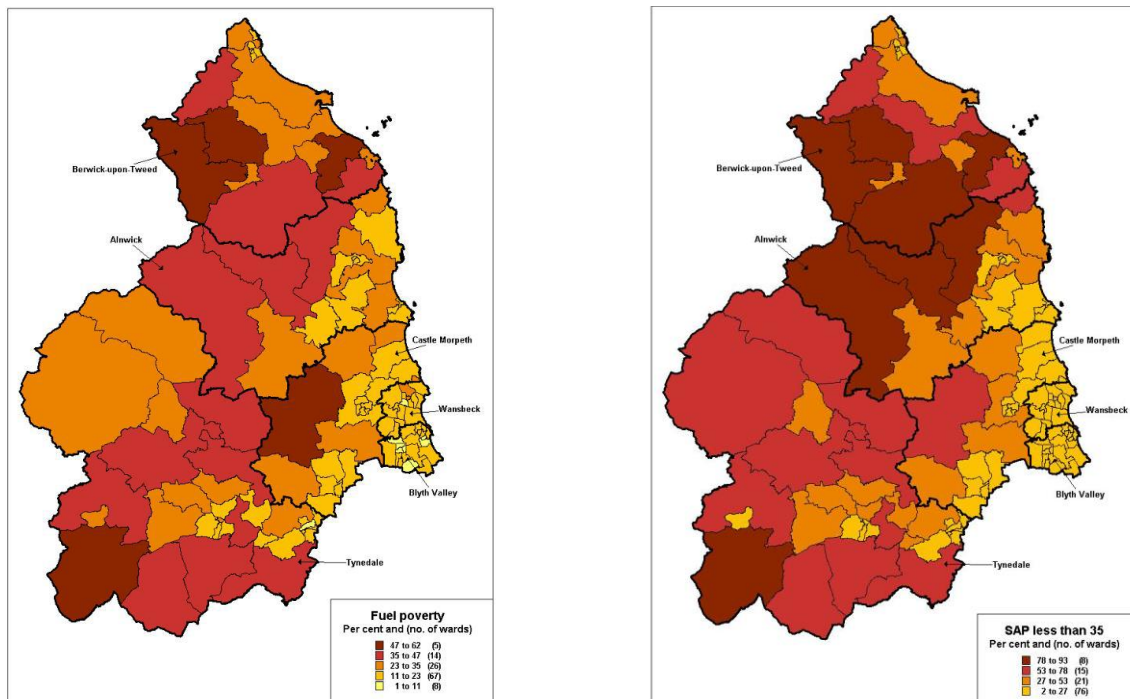
Background Information

The 2011 census showed that 525 households almost 21% of occupied homes in the area are in fuel poverty, almost double the National average of just 10.9%.

Fuel poverty is recognised to be a greater problem in rural areas for a number of reasons:

- Remote hamlets and farms are often not connected to the gas grid and are therefore dependent on more expensive energy sources such as solid fuel or oil
- Many homes are of traditional stone construction which is more difficult to insulate, especially in conservation areas where external forms of insulation cannot be used.
- A higher percentage of homes are owned by private landlords who may not be incentivised to invest in improving the energy efficiency of homes.
- Many jobs in agriculture and tourism are seasonal or part time and therefore incomes can be relatively low.

The maps below from the NCC's Home Energy Conservation Act Further Report 2013^{vi} show that rural areas of Northumberland experience more fuel poverty and lower levels of energy efficiency in homes than in urban areas.



There is currently considerable pressure on energy providers to support those households most vulnerable to fuel poverty. As a result there are many initiatives currently available e.g.:

- Warm Up North <https://warmupnorth.com> a partnership including NCC, British Gas and nine North East Councils is currently offering schemes to provide free central heating (including air source heat pumps and oil fired central heating in off grid areas), and new boilers to households on low incomes;
- NCC <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Partners/Ready-to-Switch.aspx#aboutreadytoswitch> and CAN <http://www.ca-north.org.uk/supporting-individuals/energycan-for-residents> both offer energy switching services to help households reduce electricity costs, and there are a number of oil buying clubs which use shared purchasing power to negotiate better prices
- Northern Gas Networks (NGN) <http://www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk/> runs the gas grid in the county but also has a commitment to supporting off grid areas and is willing to work with communities to improve energy efficiency or to look at joint projects to bring gas to off grid areas. NGN currently funds CAN's 'Warm Hubs' scheme (working with village halls to support local communities with energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues) <http://www.ca-north.org.uk/supporting-individuals/warm-hub-project>

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

NCC has a 10 year Energy Investment in place which aims to reduce carbon emissions, tackle fuel poverty, mitigate against the impact of energy price inflation and benefit wildlife. The National Park also expressed the view that fuel poverty is an ongoing issue in the area due to the high proportion of difficult to insulate stone properties and the high number of people living in privately rented accommodation. The Park's experience is that the biggest barrier to making improvements is difficulty working with landlords who are unwilling or unable to make the financial investment required to upgrade homes.

Many funders consider energy issues a priority for funding, eg NGN has recently opened the Community Promises Fund offering grants of £1,000 – £10,000 to third sector organisations and community groups implementing innovative approaches to delivering sustainable initiatives.

Rights of Way – Pavements, Footpaths, Cycle paths and Bridleways

Community Views

At the drop in event, seven comments were received about the need for better and safer foot paths, cycle paths and bridleways across the themes of traffic and transport, environment, leisure and health. As a result a question was included in the main survey on this issue. 113 people or 46.1% of those responding under the infrastructure theme supported this idea. A question was also asked under the theme of natural environment as to whether support was needed to provide a network of trails and footpaths to enable the public to engage with the local environment. 129 people supported this idea. Several people specifically suggested developing disused railways back into a network of safe rights of way.

In addition the British Horse Society for Northumberland has contacted CAN to ask that the fund considers supporting improvements to bridleways.

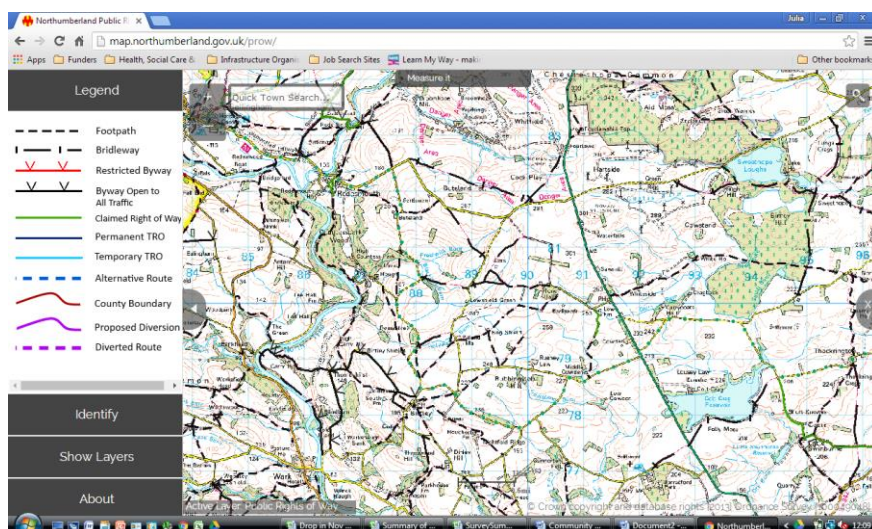
The main reasons given for supporting a better network of rights of way were:

- **Public health and safety:** most rural roads have no pavements and grass verges may be limited in places. This means that pedestrians are at greater risk than in urban areas and this can be exacerbated by higher levels of speeding. Provision of safe, accessible footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways with a degree of separation from motor traffic is essential to enable local people – particularly vulnerable groups such as older people, disabled people and children to walk safely to local facilities such as schools, local shops, social groups etc.
- **Supporting leisure and connecting people with the countryside.** There may be a perception that the lack of leisure facilities in the countryside such as cinemas and theatres, sports centres, libraries etc, is compensated for by the availability of outdoor activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding, fishing, engaging with nature etc. However such activities are dependent on a good network of rights of way being in place.
- **Supporting tourism:** There is an interest in joining up local rights of way to provide nature trails, church trails, long distance cycling and walking routes etc to provide a better offer to visitors to the area as well as to local people. Such uses could have economic impacts in attracting more people to access tourism based businesses.

A small number of respondents expressed a concern that public rights of way are a statutory responsibility and that the fund should not be used to subsidise public money.

Background Information

Northumberland has a network of more than 3,000 miles of public rights of way, including roads, footpaths and bridle ways. A definitive map of legally recognised rights of way is available on the NNC website which can be zoomed in to view routes at a very local level (see example below)^{vii}.



In addition to public rights of way there are many ‘permissive’ routes, where landowners allow the public to cross their land, but no legal right of way exists.

The area of benefit is crossed by some significant long distance trails – eg the Pennine Way and St Oswald’s Way which have an economic impact for the area, attracting tourism to the area.

NCC is the Highways Authority with responsibility for public rights of way in the county. As such their duties include asserting and protecting the rights of the public to use public rights of way. They ensure that:

- the public rights of way network is properly maintained
- public rights of way are free from obstructions
- public rights of way are signposted where they leave metalled roads (surfaced roads)
- landowners and managers comply with their legal responsibilities regarding the maintenance of stiles and gates on public rights of way and the reinstatement of paths that have been disturbed through cultivation.

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

Carrying out community projects around the provision of rights of way can be quite complex

Issues to consider, particularly when creating a new route, will include establishing rights to use the path, planning issues, health and safety considerations, maintenance, impact on the environment, consulting local people and established access interest groups etc.

Any such projects will need to work with a number of partners including:

- The NCC as highways authority
- The Landowner, or landowners of the land across which the right of way passes
- The National Park – where the path lie within their boundaries
- Natural England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>
- Parish Councils who have a role in approving new routes and can choose to take on a role in maintaining existing routes
- Interest groups such as the Ramblers Association, Cyclists Touring Club and the British Horse Society who are regularly consulted about proposed changes to the definitive map.

However, NCC actively encourages local groups to get involved with managing local pathways and particularly in:

- conducting surveys of their paths
- assisting with the way marking of paths
- undertaking certain repairs or improvements to paths
- promoting their local path network through guided walks and leaflets

Establishing new routes is more complex, but is possible.

NCC provides support to such groups in the form of:

- A publication ‘Public Paths in Northumberland A practical guide to action on rights of way for local groups’^{viii}
- Support from the Countryside Team
- The opportunity to influence decisions via the Local Access Forum (run jointly with the National Park).

Speeding and Dangerous Driving

Community Views

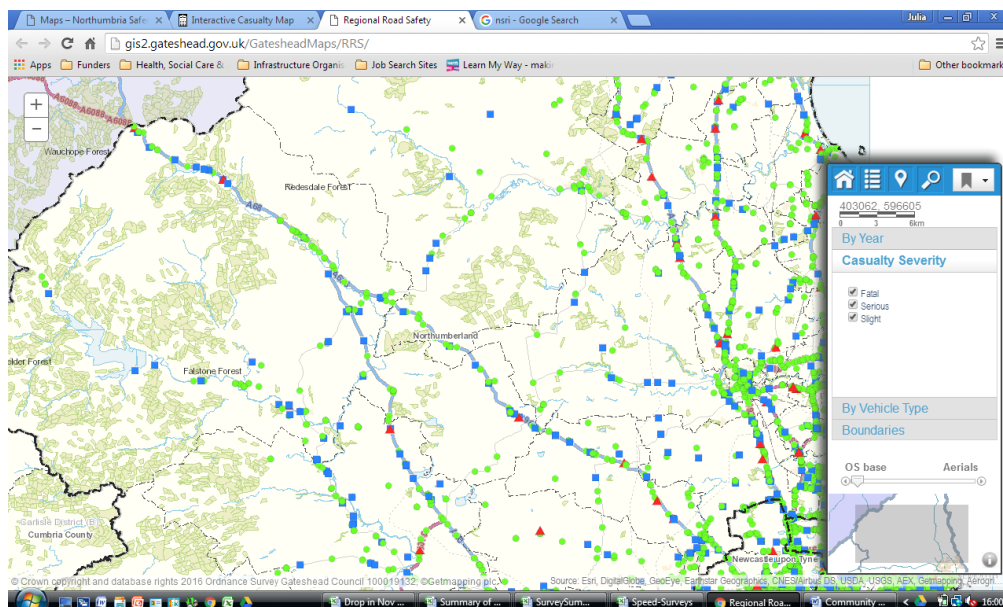
At the drop-in event 8 people raised issues regarding speeding in the area – one specifically mentioning a problem on the A696. As a result views were sought in the main survey as to whether community approaches to addressing speeding and dangerous driving in the area were needed. 89 people, 36.3% of respondents on the Infrastructure theme supported this, making it the second lowest priority under this theme and the third least supported in the survey over all. A number of people also expressed the view that dealing with dangerous driving is a statutory responsibility and therefore should not be a priority for the fund.

Background Information

The Northumbria Safer Roads Initiative (NSRI) <http://www.safespeedforlife.co.uk/> leads on combating speeding issues in the North East. NSRI's aim is to reduce deaths and injuries on the roads in the Northumbria Police area. The partnership comprises six local authorities including NCC, Northumbria Police, the fire and rescue services, Highways England, HM Court and Tribunals Service, North East Regional Road Safety Resource, TADU (traffic and accident data unit) and Newcastle University Transport Operations Research Group. The partnership aims to combat speeding primarily through safety (speed) camera enforcement conducted by Northumbria Police supported by a training, education and publicity programme.

The decision as to where cameras are located is based on data as to where accidents have happened in the previous year. If it is considered that speeding is a likely significant factor in accidents at a given site – surveys are carried out to assess the general volume of traffic and the level of speeding.

The area covered by this report seems to be one of relatively low concern to the NSRI. At the time of writing no permanent cameras were sited within the area, although one is based at Belsay on the A696 just south of the area, and 4 mobile cameras were in use along the two A Roads in the area. In 2015 surveys following accidents were carried out at Scots Gap, Elsdon, West Woodburn and Ridsdale. The following map^{ix} shows the location of accidents resulting in casualties reported in the area over the last 6 years. These are relatively low in number and mostly clustered along the A roads and 1 or 2 other routes.



Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

The process described above seems to leave little room for local communities to influence the deployment of speed cameras, and rural communities may feel that because of their small size, and the low volume of traffic, not enough is done to address speeding issues which are a real concern to them. However, there are community options that have been employed in other parts of the country including some areas of Northumberland for instance:

- Setting up voluntary monitoring groups that may use rented hand held cameras to survey speeds and raise awareness directly with speeders.
- Purchasing led displays informing motorists of their speed as they enter a village.
- Looking at ways of highlighting to motorists travelling on major country roads that they are entering a village and need to slow down. (Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has produced a useful toolkit which has been endorsed by NCC)^x.

Such initiatives are likely to require the involvement and support of the Parish Council, and will benefit from working with the NSRI partners.

Flooding, pollution and Odour from Outdated Sewerage Systems

Community Views

At the drop-in event 4 people mentioned the need for improved management of sewerage systems. One person raised issues specific to the village of Middleton where there is no access to mains sewerage, and the system supporting the majority of households is reaching the end of its life, suggesting that community-wide project to update these could be of considerable benefit including mitigating against flood risk. Inadequate sewerage systems have an impact on flood risks, and pollution in local rivers.

As a result, views were sought in the main survey as to whether there is a need for community approaches to address these issues. 82 people or 33.5% of respondents on the infrastructure theme supported this issue – making this the least supported issue under this theme. Comments were received about ways of managing flooding such as better maintenance of ditches and drains, creating natural flood management schemes etc.

Background Information

Flooding has been a high profile issue in recent years both nationally and in Northumberland with significant floods in Morpeth and outlying communities in 2008 and in Tynedale in December 2015. Dealing with these issues requires a multi-agency approach with statutory agencies such as the Environment Agency <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency> and County Council Civil Contingencies Team having leading roles.

The Northumberland County Council Flood Action Plan Version 5.6 - August 2016^{xi} identifies a number of riverside locations within the area of benefit as being at risk of flooding, ie:

- River Rede sites at Otterburn, Redesmouth West Woodburn are identified as being at high risk
- North Tyne sites at Bellingham and Chollerford are identified as being at medium risk.

The Environment Agency is working towards establishing Rapid Response Catchment plans for Bellingham and Otterburn.

In addition other areas have been subject to localised flooding in recent years – for instance, some residents in Middleton had to move out of their homes after being flooded in 2008.

Northumberland Community Flood Partnership <http://www.northwoods.org.uk/projects/completed-projects/northumberland-community-flooding-partnership/> exists to support a coordinated response to flooding. Steering group members include CAN, Northumberland County Council, The Environment Agency, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, Northumbria Police, Northumbrian Water, British Red Cross, Country Landowners Association, National Farmers Union, Northumberland National Park, Natural England, Northumberland Strategic Partnership, North Pennines AONB

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

Although flooding and sewerage are largely statutory responsibilities, there are a number of ways in which local communities and community groups may become involved:

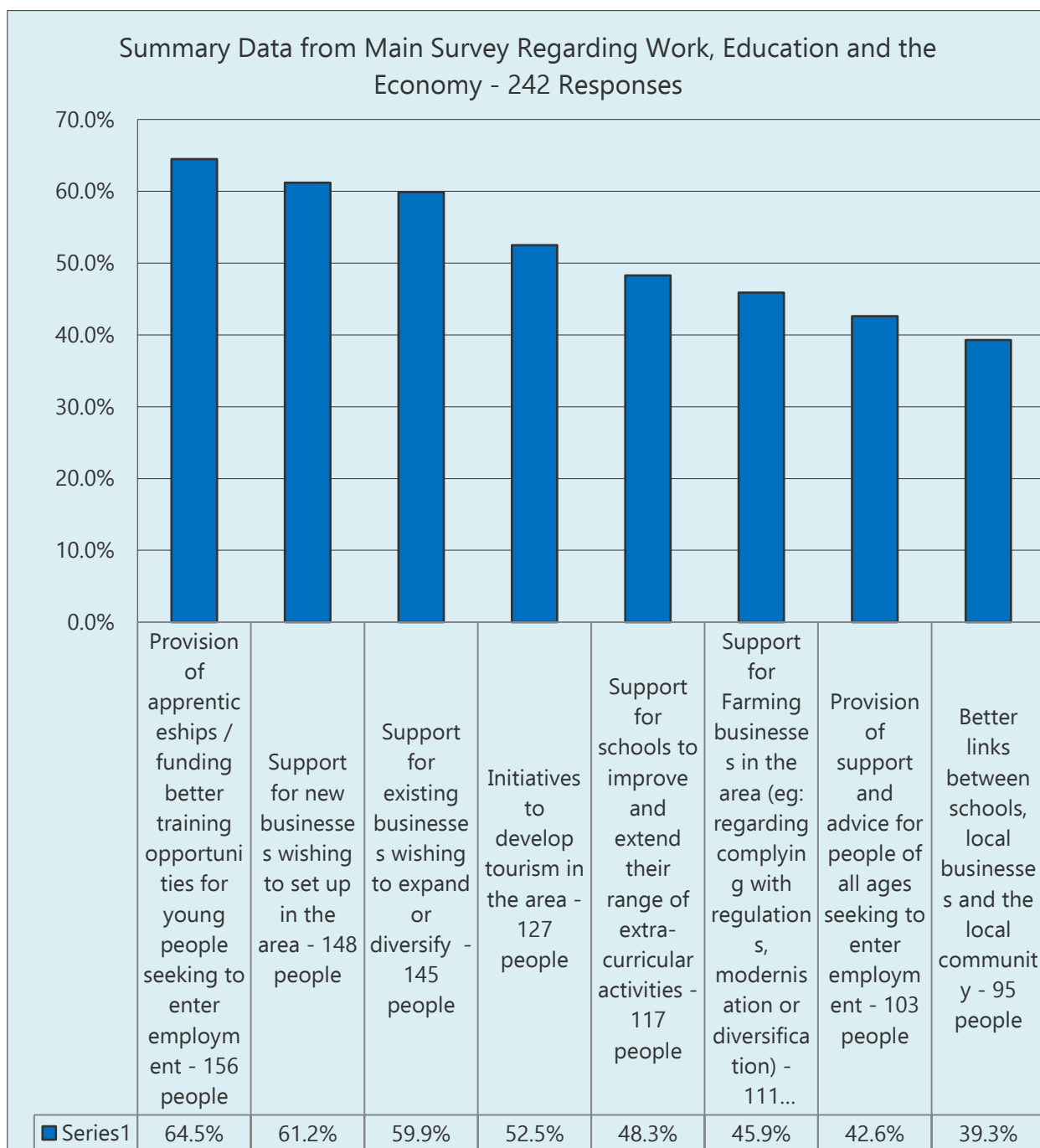
- The Environment Agency can support local communities at risk of flooding to create their own flood action plan, including appointing local volunteer flood wardens who can respond quickly to support local people
- Northumberland Rivers Trust <http://www.northumberlandriverstrust.co.uk/rtsite/> has experience of developing local landscape management projects to mitigate flood risks – a project within the area of benefit at Middleton is cited as an example of how a significant impact can be made for as little as £15K
- Northumbria water seeks to work with communities to make small changes to ensure drains can cope with surface water at times of high rainfall – an example of such a project is being developed at Wylam.

Other Suggestions Regarding Infrastructure

A small number of other ideas relating to infrastructure emerged from the comments in the main survey including:

- Provision of better parking, particularly in villages and near churches and with an emphasis on parking for disabled people
- Improvements to road surfaces (eg dealing with pot holes, restoring roads that have been dug up during development work)
- Provision of more salt boxes to treat icy roads
- Improved street lighting
- Replacement of lead water pipes
- Better waste management services – eg collection of large items, removal of garden waste, dog waste bins, and provision of recycling facilities
- Improvements to the electricity grid to reduce power cuts
- Improved street cleaning services.

Education, Training and Access to Employment



Overview of Employment, Training & Education Issues

The 2011 census suggests that there are relatively low levels of deprivation with regard to education and employment in the area around the Ray Wind Farm. Just 2.3% of the population aged 16- 74 are unemployed compared to 7.4% nationally and the numbers in part time or low paid work are very close to the national average, as are the numbers of adults with no qualifications.

However as previously stated, the age profile of the area is much higher than average, with many people being attracted to the area later in their working life looking for a more peaceful pleasant way of life in the countryside. This group have the freedom to make such choices because they already have established careers, together with higher levels of income and of educational attainment. Many will continue to

commute outside the area for work or choose to work from home on a self-employed basis. Indeed 21.9% of the population are self-employed compared to 9.8% nationally.

Whilst there are some medium sized employers in the area including NCC, The National Park, Wallington Estate (a National Trust property), local quarries and the larger landed estates, the consequence of a large proportion of the working population commuting to work or being self-employed is that there are fewer established companies of a size able to offer training to young people, or to enable career progression into well paid jobs. Many of the traditional occupations in the area such as agricultural work and work in the tourism industry are low paid and often seasonal or part time. The basic figures may not accurately reflect the needs of part of the population with regard to employment and education.

A significant concern emerging from the consultations was the need to engage young people in local life and to prevent them drifting away from the area as they grew older. This emerged strongly through informal conversations at the Drop-in Event, with Parents at Otterburn Youth Club, and with the National Park Enterprise Officer. Particular issues raised were that:

- When children reach Middle School age they often have to travel outside their home area for education, and increasingly wish to spend their leisure time near the school, where they can meet with their new school friends and access a wider range of extra-curricular activities. They therefore become less engaged in their own local communities.
- When they come to leave school, young people are likely to move away from the area due to a lack of education, training and employment opportunities locally. (Although it should be acknowledged that the Kirkley Hall Campus of Northumberland College at Ponteland is relatively close offering training opportunities in agriculture, horticulture and animal management). The long term sustainability of the area depends on retaining and attracting young people to the area and opportunities to study and work locally are vital.

Apprenticeships & Training for Young People

Community Views

Four comments were received at the drop in with regard to helping young people to enter employment through apprenticeships, training grants and help to find work. As a result views were sought on this issue in the main survey and 156 people supported this idea making it the highest priority under this theme.

Members of Cambo Young Farmers Group highlighted that one of the most significant barriers to work for young people in agricultural and forestry work was difficulty paying for ‘tickets’ – the health and safety certificates that are required to work in agricultural and forestry settings. Support in this area would be most welcome.

Background Information

Apprenticeships are recognised schemes supported by the government aimed primarily at young people aged 16 – 24. Apprentices spend part of their time working and part of their time studying for work related qualifications at a GCSE equivalent or higher level. Employers must employ apprentices for at least 16 hours per week and usually 30 hours or more, pay at least the minimum wage for their age, and provide training and support. Government incentives are in place and employers may claim £1,500 per apprentice they employ, for up to 5 apprentices.¹²

Traineeships are another Government scheme to help young people aged 16 – 24 gain work experience. These are designed for young people who are not yet ready for apprenticeships or further education, and are unpaid posts (although employers may wish to pay some expenses). Trainees are usually offered basic skills tuition alongside work experience to ensure covering basic maths, English and employability skills.¹³

Guidance is available for employers and potential apprentices and trainees on the Gov.Uk website at <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme>

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

There are local employers who have experience of providing apprenticeships such as the National Park and National Trust <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wallington> , as well as education providers such as Northumberland College <http://www.northumberland.ac.uk/> and Lantra <http://www.lantra.co.uk> who have supported apprenticeships and other training opportunities in the area. However smaller employers may benefit from support to enable them to provide the level of training and support required.

The National Park would be interested in becoming involved with any initiatives to develop local apprenticeship schemes.

Support for New Businesses

Community Views

At the drop in day responses were received suggesting there should be more support for new businesses including the provision of workshop space for start-ups. In the main questionnaire 148 people agreed that support for start-ups would be beneficial making this the second most popular suggestion under this theme (although the top 3 suggestions received very similar levels of support) and 7th most popular in the survey overall. Ideas as to the type of support that might be required included advice, funding for equipment and premises, and provision of start-up accommodation. There were also comments that if good access to broadband was available there would be no barrier to businesses moving into the area to set up.

There were also a number of comments regarding whether supporting new businesses would provide value for money for the local community. There were suggestions that start-ups are high risk and should therefore be avoided, that companies supported should be required to make a commitment to stay in the area for a minimum time if they were supported, and that funding for start-ups should be in the form of loans rather than grants. Other people highlighted the wider benefits that could be achieved – for instance suggesting that social entrepreneurs or companies that have the potential to offer local employment should be prioritised

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

A range of support is available in Northumberland for new businesses including:

- NBSL <https://nbsl.org.uk/> who provide advice & support on exploring business ideas, and writing a business plan
- The North East Rural Growth Network <https://www.archnorthumberland.co.uk/arch-business/rural-growth-network/rural-growth-network-2> which runs Enterprise Hubs such as Kirkharle which offer low cost premises and ‘Be Your Own Boss’ workshops.
- Arch Northumberland <https://www.archnorthumberland.co.uk/arch-business> which offers business support
- The North East Growth Hub <http://www.northeastgrowthhub.co.uk/> a website helping businesses identify sources of help such as loan finance.
- The Northumberland Uplands LEADER programme <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Partners/Northumberland-Uplands-LEADER.aspx> which currently provides capital funding (although this is European Funding and following Brexit, it is unclear whether funding will be available beyond the Autumn Statement).
- The New Enterprise Allowance, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-enterprise-allowance-campaign> which is available through Job Centres to support unemployed people choosing to become self-employed to through the first 26 weeks of running their business. As well as receiving a small benefit to supplement their income, beneficiaries can access training, support from a volunteer business mentor and access to a start-up loan.

Support for Existing Businesses

Community Views

- Suggestions received at the Drop in Day included
- providing funding to support existing businesses with skills development (particularly IT skills), setting up a ‘power network’ encouraging local businesses to support each other

- supporting businesses with the provision of better broadband.

In the main survey 145 people supported the idea of supporting existing business making this idea the third most popular in this theme, marginally behind support for new businesses and tenth most popular in the survey overall.

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

Many of the organisations mentioned above also provide support for existing businesses

- NBSL runs the North East Business Support Fund which gives up to 35% funding for business improvement projects costing between £3,000 and £8,000 (maximum grant of £2,800) and can be used for a wide range of purposes including marketing website development etc.
- The North East Rural Growth Networks offers The Rural Business Growth Fund (RBGF), designed to support small business capital investment projects that will expand productive capacity or enable diversification into new markets or products. Grants of up to 40% of eligible costs are available with grant levels of £10,000 to £60,000 to support priority sectors including Manufacturing, Knowledge Intensive Businesses, Renewable Energy, Environment, Food & Drink, High Value Tourism
- The North East Growth Hub and Northumberland Uplands LEADER programme also support existing businesses.

The National Park expressed a perception that good support is available for start-up businesses and for well established businesses that are capable of making more complicated applications to, for instance, European funds. However, there is relatively little support for small businesses taking the next steps after their set-up period.

Initiatives to Develop Tourism in the Area

Community Views

At the drop in, and in various conversations with the community it has been suggested that initiatives to develop tourism could have a wide range of benefits for the community and in the main survey 127 people supported this priority.

Comments suggest that making the most of the tourism potential in the area could bring money into the villages, and help to support existing businesses such as shops, holiday accommodation and even village halls. Others suggested that facilities provided to attract tourists to the area would also be of benefit to local people, where these would not be viable if catering for the local population alone. For example, people in Kirkwhelpington would like a village shop but recognise that the local population is too small to make this a viable venture. However, St Oswald's Way passes near to the village, which means a large number of visitors pass through. Residents are aware of demand for a campsite in the area, and provision of such a site might in turn bring enough business for a shop. Recreational facilities might also be available to both local people and visitors. There were several comments through the consultations on the need to support heritage initiatives, both existing (such as Bellingham Heritage Centre) and proposed (eg a heritage centre at Elsdon).

There were also some general comments on measures that could support tourism including, provision of more accommodation for walkers and cyclists, including low cost campsites, provision of more brown signs to tourist attractions, development of local information leaflets and local items for sale in tourism outlets.

Background Information

There are a wide range of local assets and initiatives that could be further capitalised on to bring maximum benefit from tourism into the area including:

- The presence of the National Park and proximity to Hadrian's Wall and the new Sill project
 - The Dark Skies Park <http://www.visitnorthumberland.com/darkskies> which borders on the area
- The Revitalising Redesdale Heritage Project <http://revitalisingredesdale.org.uk/> (a landscape level initiative being developed with funding from the Heritage Lottery)
- Well recognised trails through the area including the Pennine Way and St Oswald's Way.

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

Tourism Businesses are able to access all the sources of general business support listed above.

In addition:

- Northumberland Tourism <http://www.northumberlandtourism.com/> (the Tourist Board for the county) offers support and resources for tourism businesses including 'toolkits', training and access to marketing opportunities and links with specific initiatives that arise from time to time, for instance around marketing local foods, etc
 - Peer support may be available through 'The Heart of Northumberland' Tourism Association <https://www.theheartofnorthumberland.co.uk/>.

There may also be opportunities to work in partnership with larger players that have a presence in the area such as The National Park and National Trust, for whom promotion of tourism is a key aim. For instance the National Park has expressed an interest in developing tourism related apprenticeships and training opportunities to support better paid roles in the field.

There is potential to develop area wide initiatives to give underlying support to businesses and community groups – such as developing trails and networks (eg church heritage trails, nature trails, restoring old railways as paths, providing promotional materials to market the area).

Village halls in many areas supplement their income and contribute to the local tourism offer by providing a range of services: eg Capheaton Village Hall houses a cafe for walkers and cyclists on a Sunday, various local village halls offer bunk-room style accommodation for groups of walkers, scout groups, artists etc.

Support for Extra-Curricular Activities for Schools

Community Views

At the drop in, 4 comments were received regarding working with schools and through the general survey, 117 people supported the idea that the fund could provide support for extra-curricular activities.

The main reasons people identified for supporting this area were to:

- Provide children from rural areas with a wider range of experiences and educational opportunities than would otherwise be available for those living in isolated communities
- To enable children to stay engaged with their local communities.

Possible barriers that local people identified to providing these services would be:

- The need for transport to allow young people living in isolated areas to access activities
- The fact that middle and high schools serving the area are mostly located outside the 10km radius from the wind farm and serve a much wider population

No specific ideas emerged as to the type of activities that would be of benefit.

Support for Farming Businesses

Community Views

The needs of farming businesses were specifically raised at the drop-in day, with identified needs including:

- support to farmers to adapt their practice to comply with various compliance issues
- support with broadband provision, to enable them to complete their paperwork on line.

In the survey 111 people indicated support for this priority, making this Seventh from bottom in the overall list of priorities. Views were also expressed in the main survey that farming already receives significant financial support and subsidies and should not be a priority.

However discussions with the Cambo Young Farmer's Group indicated that this is a more important issue to them. Many of the members of this group saw themselves as having a long-term future in local farming, and identified three areas in which they would appreciate support, ie:

- Funding and local opportunities to enable them to achieve their health and safety certificates

- Business advice for young people wanting to work in agriculture on a self-employed basis
- Help for young people wanting to take on a farm tenancy for the first time.

Background Information

The Rural Payments Agency <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/rural-payments-agency> is the main source of Funding for farming businesses delivering European funding such as the Basic Payments Scheme. Currently all European grants agreed before the Autumn Statement are being honoured but the long term future of grants and subsidies is unclear following Brexit. The new Northern Hill Farming Panel was formed this summer to represent uplands farmers in negotiating with the Government for future support.

Farmers wishing to diversify into other areas of business may be able to access the sources of general business support highlighted above, but may have to set up separate businesses to do this as there are limits as to how much state aid any one business can access.

Support and Advice for People Seeking Employment (All Ages)

Community Views

Five comments were received at the drop in regarding providing support for unemployed people, of any age, to help them find work and 103 people completing the survey supported this aim, making this one of the lower priorities overall.

Background Information

Unemployed people living in this rural area may have more difficulty accessing support than those in more populated areas:

- There is a need to travel to job centres at Hexham, Morpeth or Alnwick to sign on fortnightly. Financial support is not available to do this and transport services are an issue in the area. Similarly, making travel arrangements to attend interviews may be more difficult.
- Most jobs are now advertised on line rather than by more traditional methods, and the Job Centre requires benefit claimants to keep an online record of their job seeking activities. This can prove difficult for those with poor access to the internet.
- There are fewer local training opportunities. In 2016, the decision was made to close some of the more rural Adult Education Centres which provided significant support with training for job-seekers. Bellingham Adult Education Centre was one of those closed. There is however still potential for some outreach services to be offered if a need and an appropriate venue can be found.
- The amount of funding held by the job centre to support individuals with costs such as travel to interviews or buying work clothing and equipment has dropped significantly in recent years, and accessing one to one support can be very difficult, although there are some charities which may provide one off payments.

Examples of Community Approaches & Possible Sources of Help

CAN has experience of running job-club activities from local community buildings and has found that there are a number of services which are willing to come out to rural areas to provide support, if appropriate venues are provided eg:

- Careers officers linked with the job centre
- CAB offering advice on benefits issues
- Adult Education and other education providers offering training in basic skills and use of IT
- The Bridge Project – a new partnership funded to reach out to those facing multiple barriers to work.
- Generation NE – working to get young people aged 17 – 24 into employment.
- A small local work club is currently available at Bellingham Fire Station.

Better links Between Schools, Local Businesses & Communities

Community Views

The idea of building better links between schools, businesses and communities to develop local work and training opportunities came out of the drop-in day.

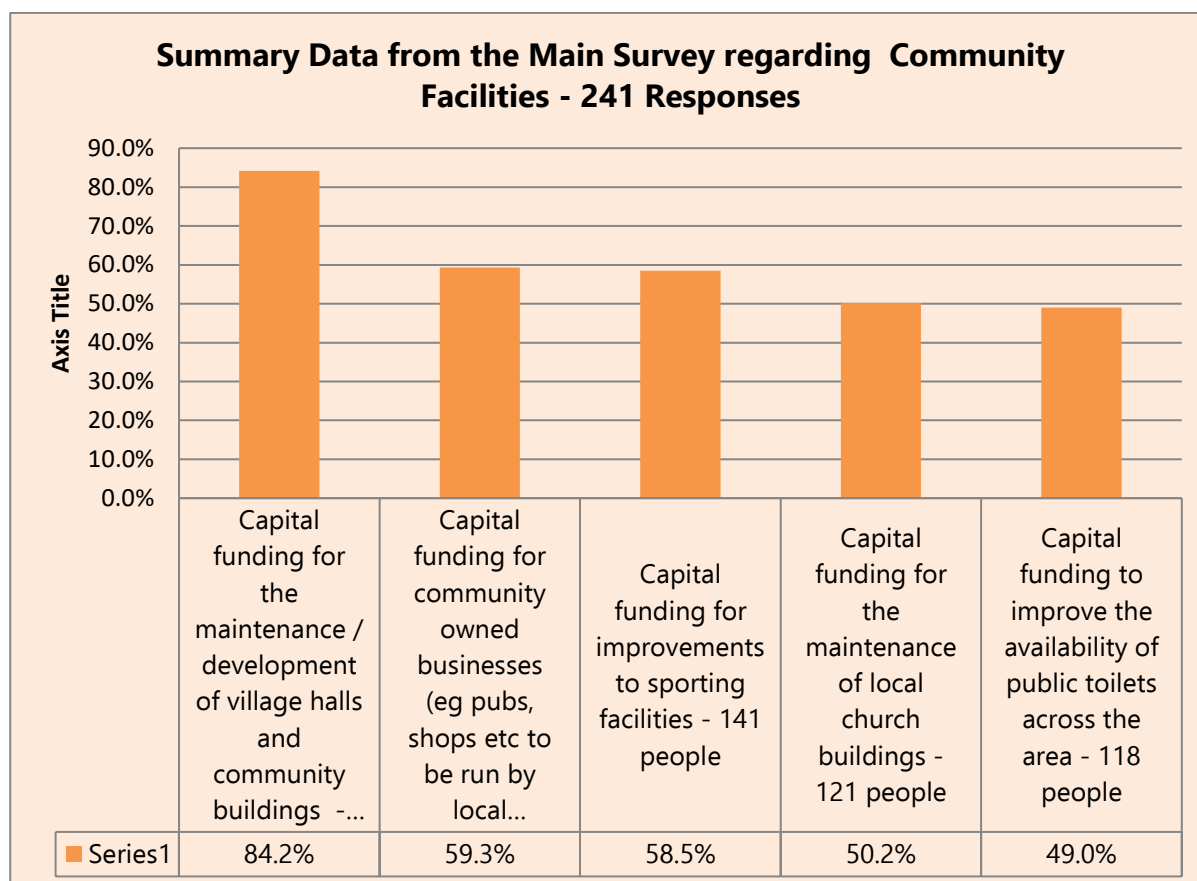
The idea was supported by 95 respondents to the main survey. Making this the least popular suggestion under the theme of education, training and the economy and fourth from bottom in the survey overall. However parents at the Otterburn Youth Club were keen to see any such initiatives developed which might keep young people engaged with the local community.

Other Suggestions Regarding Education, Training and Access to Employment

A small number of other suggestions were made:

- Cambo Young Farmers mentioned that one or two of them had been involved in exchange visits to rural areas in other countries, organised by the National Park and felt more such opportunities would be useful
- There were a couple of suggestions in the main survey that it might be beneficial to offer bursaries for children with a particular talent to allow them to access tuition and support to develop this.

Community Facilities



Capital Funding for Village Halls and Community Buildings

Community Views

Seven people suggested measures around maintaining and developing village halls at the drop in, and this proved to be the single most popular issue raised in the community survey with 203 agreeing this should be a priority. Cambo Young Farmers also highlighted this as a major issue both because they recognise that most of their activities are dependent on the availability of these venues, and because they believe other parts of the community are equally dependent. Youth groups tended to take it for granted that community buildings are available and were largely unaware of any issues committees may face in keeping these open. However, they did identify that activities at community buildings provide their main source of recreational support.

Background Information

The high level of support for this priority probably reflects the fact that village and church halls are often the only public building in small rural communities offering a focus for community life. They are likely to be the only possible venue for many of the other activities highlighted in this report. In recent years there has been a steady drop in the funding available for a wide range of rural services and community buildings are often used to house community initiatives to fill the gaps. For instance as well as providing recreational activities and community events, village halls within rural Northumberland currently offer:

- Local post offices & shops
- GP outreach services
- ‘Rest Centres’ - officially designated places of shelter in emergency situations such as floods, power failures etc.
- Preschool facilities and additional classrooms for schools
- Youth Clubs
- Job Clubs
- Meeting rooms and offices for small businesses

- Polling stations and consultation meetings for local statutory agencies
- Local heritage projects
- Public access to payphones and toilets where other services have been withdrawn.

Within the area of benefit there are village or church halls at Barrasford, Birtley, Bellingham, Cambo, Capheaton, Chollerton, Corsenside, Elsdon, Kirkwhelpington, Middleton, Otterburn and Scots Gap. All are run by voluntary committees who take on considerable responsibility with regard to maintaining the buildings and ensuring that they are run in accordance with all legal requirements. The condition of the local halls varies considerably with some requiring total refurbishment and others having achieved recent funding to carry out extensive work.

Possible Sources of Support and Community Approaches

Support with regard to day to day management and fundraising for projects is available through CAN's Village Hall service. However finding the funding to maintain the buildings can be a constant struggle. There are numerous sources of small grants that village halls can access, but funding for large scale refurbishments are more difficult to find than in the recent past. The Big Lottery Reaching Communities – Buildings strand is one main option for those rural communities in the 50% most deprived lower super output areas and there are other options such as the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation but these can be very competitive and require extensive evidence of need.

Capital funding for Community Owned Businesses (eg Pubs, Shops etc to be Run by Local People)

Community Views

Five people suggested the need for more local shops and pubs in the area at the drop-in – one specifically suggesting a community run shop. Two respondents to the main survey suggested mobile shops / community food vans as an alternative to serve more than one village. One person suggested that the fund should support a local Community Development Trust that could run community assets. When asked a specific question about community owned businesses in the main survey, 143 people agreed that the fund should support community owned businesses making this the second most popular suggestion under this priority.

Background Information

There have been a number of pressures on rural businesses such as shops and pubs over recent years. As more properties have been bought as second homes, the demand for services such as pubs, cafes and shops has dropped, especially outside the main tourist season. For instance in recent years the proprietors of pubs at Otterburn and Elsdon closed down their business giving rise to fears that these would be permanently lost. The Post Office has had a policy in recent years of closing down some of its less profitable rural branches which were often housed in village shops that relied on the income they generated, and often faced closure as a result.

Possible Community Solutions and Sources of Help

Many communities have responded to the threat of the loss of these vital services by taking on community ownership and managing the facilities themselves. Within Northumberland there are good examples such as the Haltwhistle Community Shop, and the Rose & Crown Pub at Slaley.

There are various sources of help for such enterprises:

- The Localism Act 2011^{xii} gave local communities the right to register vital buildings such as public houses and shops with their local authority as 'Assets of Community Value' and to have a chance to bid to purchase these if they are at risk of closure.
- National Organisations such as the Plunkett Foundation <https://www.plunkett.co.uk/>, Locality <http://locality.org.uk/>, Power to Change <http://www.powertochange.org.uk/> and SIB (Social Investment Business) <http://www.sibgroup.org.uk/> provide significant support to communities running their own businesses including grant and loan funding programmes.
- Local support is available from Northumberland County Council and CAN to enable local communities to take on their own assets.

Capital Funding for Sporting Facilities

Community Views

At the drop in 10 people suggested that funding should be made available for improving sports facilities and this idea was supported by 141 respondents to the survey. Younger children at the two youth groups felt that recreational facilities were their highest priority and made suggestions varying from more outdoor play equipment, the provision of camp sites with fire pits to facilitate local outdoor adventures, to the provision of a new swimming pool in the area. However many realised that the later might not be viable in an area of such sparse population. Other suggestions included ideas such as a 'Go-Ape' type facility to attract visitors to the area.

The Cambo Young Farmers recognised that large scale projects may not be sustainable, and felt that funds would be best spent on small scale improvements to facilities and equipment available at Village Halls, enabling them and other local groups to organise their own activities.

Several comments mentioned the need for funding to improve parks and play areas including particular areas at Otterburn and Colwell.

Background Information

There are few sporting facilities in the area with The RTC Sports and Leisure Centre at Otterburn being the venue most often mentioned. A number of other sports clubs and facilities mentioned that they would be interested in accessing funding including Bellingham Gym (a private business), Belsay Cricket Club, and Bellingham Golf Club. There are also a number of local parks and play areas in villages such as the equipped play area at Chisleways at Barrasford, and the park at Bellingham which has a recently refurbished play area.

By and large people have to travel to Rothbury, Morpeth, Hexham or Tyneside to access more extensive sporting facilities such as swimming pools, skating rinks and ten-pin bowling. Potential was also identified for funding better sporting facilities at primary schools and the one middle school in the area which could be shared with the rest of the community.

Possible Community Solutions and Sources of Help

Active Northumberland have a Sports Development Team <http://www.activenorthumberland.org.uk/Active-in-the-community.aspx> that can help local communities bring sporting activities into their local area, and access funding and support available through national sporting bodies and funders such as Spotted, (a national sports development charity set up to ensure a legacy from the London Olympics). In some areas of Northumberland the County Council has set aside Section 106 funding from housing development to support the provision of sports, play and recreation facilities. A wide range of other funders will also support sports and recreational activities.

As well as providing permanent facilities, communities may consider working with partners to bring mobile facilities such as skateboard ramps, climbing walls, skating rinks and bouncy castles to the area on a temporary basis.

Capital Funding for Church Buildings

Community Views

9 comments were received at the drop in regarding improving church buildings and several people talked at some length on the importance of this issue. In the main survey this theme was supported by 121 people. Cambo Young Farmers also saw maintaining churches as an issue of importance for local communities.

A number of reasons for supporting churches were given eg:

- Churches continue to provide a valued source of both spiritual and social support particularly for older people in the community

- Many church buildings have historical and cultural significance that should be conserved, and there is potential to add to the local tourism offer by creating visitor centres, church trails etc.
- As the availability of rural services decline, there is a growing role for churches to provide a venue for community activities, especially in locations where no village halls, schools or public houses are available. As congregation sizes drop, generating funding from hiring out for community purposes and attracting more people to use the buildings can be seen as ways of protecting the sustainability of these buildings.

Background Information

There are at least 18 churches within the 10-mile radius of the Ray Wind Farm including:

- Anglican churches located at Bellingham, Birtley, Cambo, Chollerton, Corsenside, Elsdon, Gunnerton, Kirkheaton, Kirkwhelpington, Otterburn, West Woodburn
- Catholic churches located at Bellingham, Otterburn, Swinburne
- Methodist churches located at Bellingham and Scots Gap
- United Reformed Churches located at Bellingham, Great Bavington.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Support

Reordering schemes are quite common, within rural churches in Northumberland, ie: redesigning internal spaces to be used more flexibly for both religious and community purposes. Specific funding for church buildings is available from a number of sources including funds associated with the various denominations, funding to preserve church heritage including features such as bells and bell towers, organs etc. Churches are also able to access a wide range of funding to support non-religious community activities.

Capital Funding for Public Toilets

Community Views

The need for funding to open / reopen public toilets across the area emerged as a strong theme at the drop-in event with 9 comments received, and people discussing this at some length with volunteers and staff at the event. 118 people agreed with this issue in the main survey.

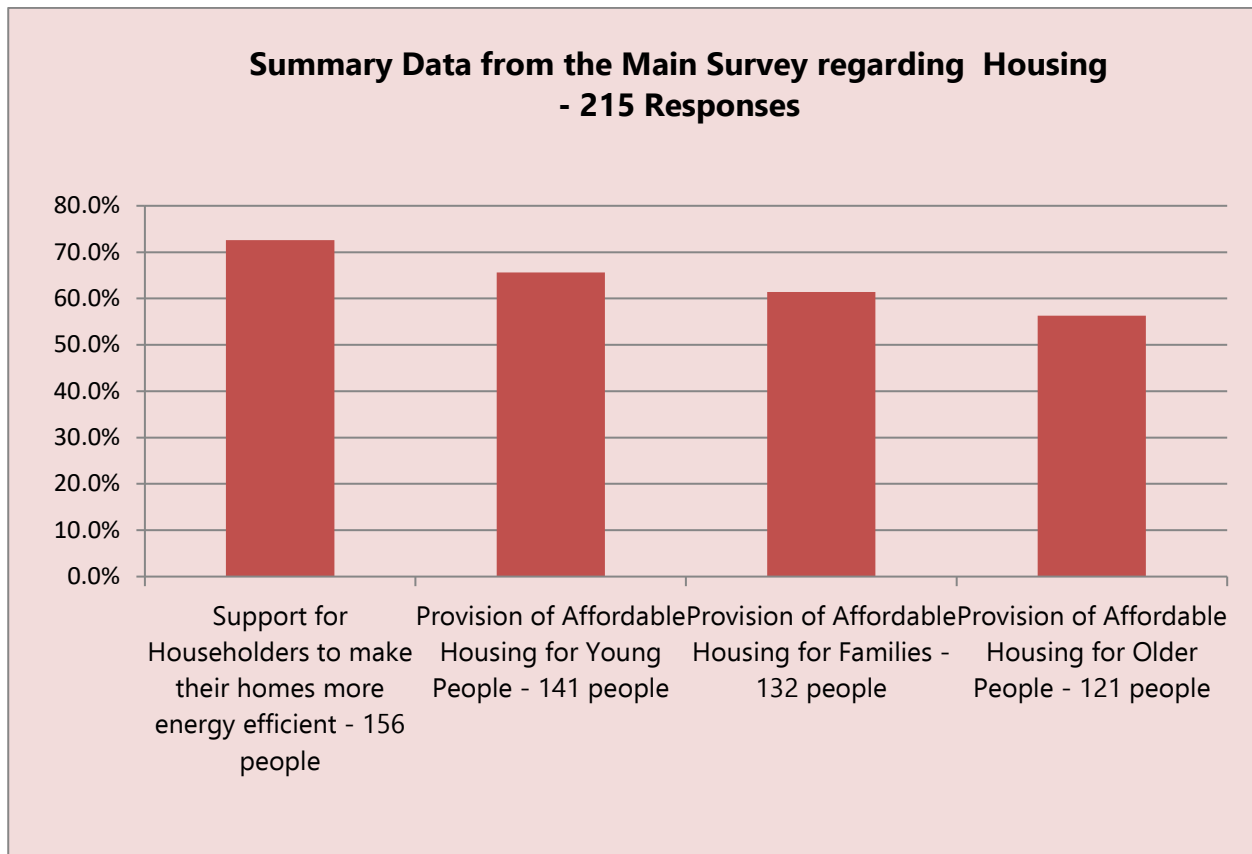
Background Information

In recent years Northumberland County Council has passed responsibility for maintaining public toilets to the parish councils, and in the area of benefit most parish councils serve small populations and consequently have very small precepts. Inevitably this has led to the closure of many facilities. It may have an impact for more vulnerable people within the community such as older and disabled people and families needing access to toilets and changing facilities for babies and young children when they are out and about.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

Provision of public toilets is unlikely to be an attractive cause to most charitable funders, and even if capital funds are found, it is unlikely that ongoing maintenance costs would be met. Some communities have found their own ways of addressing this issue, for instance keeping toilets at local village halls and churches open at times when these buildings are not in general use. Volunteers often make a commitment to clean the toilets on a regular basis.

Housing



Four issues were raised under the housing theme, with the spread of support for each of these being fairly small (the most popular attracting 156 votes of support and the least popular 121 votes). Much of the background evidence on this theme has been presented as a single section as the information is relevant across all the issues.

Community Views

Support for Householders to Make Their Homes More Energy Efficient

This was the most popular measure under the housing theme with 156 people supporting this idea. However, energy efficiency and fuel poverty was also covered under the infrastructure theme and has been dealt with in detail under this theme.

Provision of Affordable Housing for Young People

3 people at the drop in event and 141 respondents to the main survey felt the fund should support more housing for young people / first time buyers making this the second most popular heading under this theme in the survey. Comments included that provision of affordable housing must go hand in hand with provision of employment opportunities if young people are to be encouraged to stay in or move to the area. This view was echoed by the National Park's enterprise officer.

The Cambo Young Farmers felt this to be an issue of great importance to them. Many of them aspired to live in the area and work in agriculture for the long term future and felt the lack of affordable housing to be a big problem. They stated that many of them had no option but to live at home with their parents for much longer than they would like as there were few affordable houses in the area and those that are available are in poor condition. Some were already living in rented homes that they considered to be in a poor state and difficult to heat. They felt that there was very little prospect of ever owning their own homes in the area.

Provision of Affordable Housing for Families

1 person at the Drop in event and 132 respondents to the main survey felt the fund should support more housing for families.

Provision of Affordable Housing for Older People

3 people at the drop in event and 121 respondents to the main survey felt that the fund should support more housing for older people.

Two comments were also received that there was a need for more care home places or warden assisted accommodation in the area.

Other Suggestions Related to Housing

Several people commented that there are a large number of empty properties in the area that could be restored, converted or brought back into use as affordable housing.

Background information

Northumberland's local development plan^{15xiii} has been under development for several years and is currently at pre-submission draft stage. The plan identifies providing existing and future communities with a choice of decent, affordable homes as fundamental to the wellbeing of sustainable communities and businesses in Northumberland. The strategic housing market assessment identifies a need to provide 401 new affordable dwellings per year over a 5 year period (a total of 2,005). It is predicted that 1047 of these homes can be provided within sites that already have planning permission in place, so there is scope to identify sites that can incorporate another 955 homes.

There is an assumption that development will focus on main towns and service centres which have the infrastructure in place to support growth and that building on green belt land should be kept to a minimum. However, there is a recognised need that some small scale development is also required in rural communities, especially to support local employment. Furthermore due to the rural nature of the county, the plan recognises that building on small sites will make a considerable contribution to meeting targets for new housing (23% of new homes delivered in Northumberland in the 5 year period to 31st March 2015 were built on sites of less than 5 units).

A number of factors make developing high quality affordable housing in rural areas difficult:

- The local development plan recognises that the high demand for second and holiday homes in accessible uplands areas can have a negative impact on the provision of affordable housing, (housing stock can move into and out of holiday use without planning consent)
- The National Park is the planning authority for much of the area close to the Ray Wind Farm, and will only approve limited building and only in communities where growth is considered sustainable (ie where adequate infrastructure is in place)
- Much of the existing housing stock available in rural areas consists of traditional built stone buildings which are difficult to insulate, especially in conservation areas where external cladding is not an option.

Recent changes in National Housing policy make it more difficult to deliver affordable housing, in particular:

- The Government has decided to exclude development sites with less than 10 dwellings from the obligation to provide a proportion of affordable housing
- The right to buy has been extended for tenants of social housing which will make it more difficult to ensure that houses remain affordable for the long term future.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

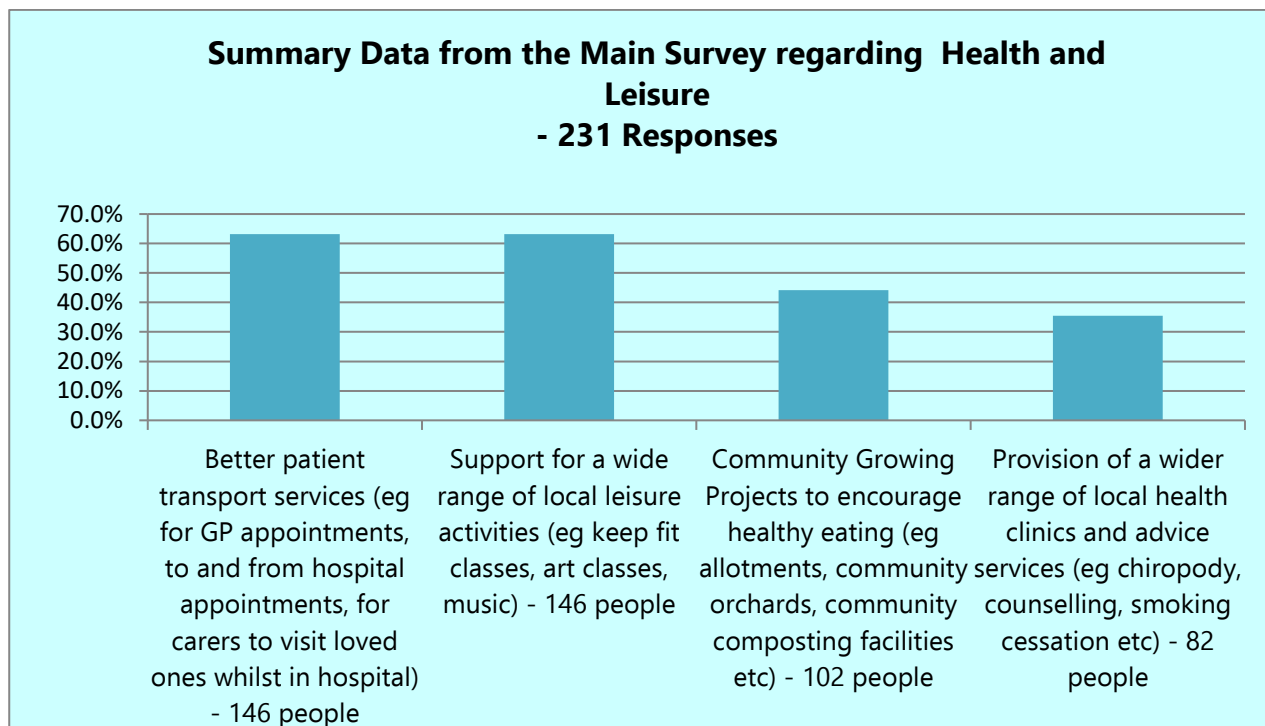
There are a number of ways in which rural communities can influence local housing development:

- Neighbourhood Plans. The Localism Act 2011 introduced the right for local communities to provide their own neighbourhood plans which form part of the statutory planning documentation and set out local views on potential development of the built environment. Although a number of neighbourhood

plans are completed or underway in Northumberland – none have been started with in the Ray wind farm area

- Communities are able to develop community owned housing developments – for instance very successful community owned affordable housing schemes have been developed at Wooler and Stocksfield in Northumberland. The national organisation ‘Locality’ <http://locality.org.uk/> (formerly the Association of Local Development Trusts) offers support to communities wanting to establish their own housing developments. Communities can access a range of funding through the Homes and Communities Agency <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency> (specific funds available change regularly)
- The Homes and Communities Agency facilitates a North East Community Led Housing Group involving community led housing groups and housing associations, which enables sharing of information, and peer support
- Northumberland County Council, CAN and local housing associations are considering developing a new vehicle for affordable housing ownership in the County with a view to ensure that homes stay available in the longer term.

Health, Wellbeing and Leisure



At the Drop-in Health and Leisure were considered as different themes. However the level of responses on each of these were relatively low, and many of the ideas relating to recreation were around keeping fit and healthy or could be related to maintaining a general sense of wellbeing and social inclusion. The two themes were therefore combined in the main survey.

Better Patient Transport Services (eg for GP Appointments, Hospital Appointments and for Carers to Visit Loved Ones in Hospital)

Community Views

At the drop-in event 6 people raised this issue and 146 people supported this issue in the main survey, making this the joint most supported issue under the health and recreation theme and one of the top ten issues over all. No further comments were made to expand on this need.

Background Information

Due to the remote nature of the area, people need to travel much further than their urban counterparts to access health services. Most people in the area will receive GP services from the Bellingham practice, Scots Gap Practice or Rothbury Practice (with outreach at Harbottle Village Hall). For some of those living in outlying areas this will involve travelling up to 10 miles.

There is a community hospital at Rothbury offering limited services, but for other hospital services people need to travel to Alnwick, Hexham, Ashington, Cramlington or Tyneside depending on the health condition and home location within the area. As described in the transport section above, there is limited access to public transport making access very difficult for those without their own transport, and public transport is often not timed conveniently to facilitate travel for appointments or visiting hours.

In the last year, funding issues and difficulty attracting GPs to rural practices have led to the closure of some local health services which may have a greater impact in this area. The Harbottle GP practice which served some residents in Redesdale closed down in the autumn of 2015. Since the survey was sent out, Bellingham Practice has closed an outreach service at Otterburn Memorial Hall, and the inpatient ward at Rothbury Community Hospital was temporarily closed very recently. This means people have even further to travel for appointments.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

Many communities in Northumberland have developed their own transport projects to provide transport to those unable to access the ambulance service, or to get to their local GPs. For instance Churches Together in Upper Coquetdale offer a volunteer car scheme.

Support for a Wide Range of Leisure Activities

Community Views

At the Drop in Event 20 suggestions were received regarding provision of a wide range of local leisure activities (eg keep fit classes, art classes, music, cinema nights etc) and 146 respondents to the survey agreed that the fund should support such activities.

Background Information

A wide range of such activities are already available at Village Halls and other venues across the area. However there is always potential to develop new initiatives to contribute to a vibrant local community life.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

These are traditionally the kind of activities that local communities are able to arrange and deliver themselves, often led by local people with skills and knowledge related to a particular activity. There are various organisations that can provide additional support where needed: for instance Active Northumberland can put communities in touch with coaches in many sports, as can national governing bodies. Groups such as WEA <https://www.wea.org.uk/>, University of the 3rd Age <https://www.u3a.org.uk/> and Northumberland Adult Learning Service <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Learning/Skills.aspx> can help find lecturers for educational classes. Highlights rural touring scheme <http://www.highlightsnorth.co.uk/> brings theatre to village halls, and British Film Institute <http://www.bfi.org.uk/> offers support to communities wanting to start their own cinema. There are also numerous small grants schemes which will support these funds, although there may be competition from outside the area, and applications must be made by formally constituted community groups.

Community Growing Projects to Encourage Healthy Eating

Community Views

Four suggestions were received at the Drop in Event regarding Community Growing (eg allotments, community orchards, community composting facilities etc) and healthy eating projects and 102 respondents to the main survey agreed such initiatives should be supported through the fund, making it one of the issues receiving least support in the survey.

Background

There is wide interest within Northumberland and nationwide in community growing projects as a way of supporting healthy living, relieving mental health problems, educating young people, bringing communities together, and reducing food miles and thereby having an impact on carbon emissions.

Within Northumberland there are a wide range of projects including Incredible Edible Hexham (a project using spare ground around the town to grow food for anyone to use), community allotments, community orchards, community ownership of apple presses to produce fruit juice from fruit that would otherwise be wasted, and food growing projects focused on local schools.

Issues that have to be addressed include finding and acquiring the rights to use appropriate land, and ensuring health and safety and safeguarding issues are properly addressed. However, projects can achieve a lot at relatively low cost, depending largely on volunteer time.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

There are a number of charities that can help local communities with community growing projects, including Groundwork North East <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/northeast>, and The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers <https://www.tcv.org.uk/>. A range of websites can offer further help including

<https://www.sustainweb.org/growinghealth/> which provides a toolkit for community growing schemes, <http://growingcommunities.org/> and <http://www.healthyplaces.org.uk/>.

There are also a wide range of funders that will support growing projects including specific grants at the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, Tesco's Bags of Help, funds associated with local quarries and the aggregates industry and many others. However, these are subject to wide competition from other geographical areas

Provision of a Wider Range of Local Health Clinics and Advice Services

Community Views

14 suggestions were made at the Drop in regarding the provision of a wider range of local health clinics and advice services (eg chiropody, counselling, smoking cessation etc) and 82 respondents to the survey supported this as a potential use of the fund. This made this the least supported issue raised in the entire main survey, (jointly with flooding and pollution and sewerage). Comments received suggest that this was because provision of these services was widely seen as a statutory duty. The Cambo Young Farmers reported high levels of satisfaction with the services they receive from their local GP at Scots Gap. However they did have some ideas regarding proactive steps they could take to address health issues and an attempt should be made to take some of these ideas forward. The other youth groups did not report any significant worries with regard to health issues.

Background

As reported above, there have been a number of reductions in local health services over the last year, mostly since the survey was distributed. This might have an impact on the level of interest in this issue if the questionnaire was repeated.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

Whilst provision of these services may be primarily a statutory responsibility, there are ways in which communities can have an impact:

- Community Buildings may be able to house outreach services such as chiropody, health visitor clinics, smoking cessation clinics etc. These would be delivered by health professionals and it is likely that the community would need to work with their local GP and other health professionals to evidence a level of need that would justify professionals working in this way – ie demonstrating that this is a cost effective way of delivering a better service. Every GP practice is now expected to have a Patient Participation Group made up of representatives of the practice staff, and patients who volunteer to take on the role. This may be an effective route to establishing such services
- Establishing local branches and affiliated groups of national health charities which provide a wide range of information and advice services for members sometimes related to managing particular conditions.

Other Suggestions Relating to Health & Leisure

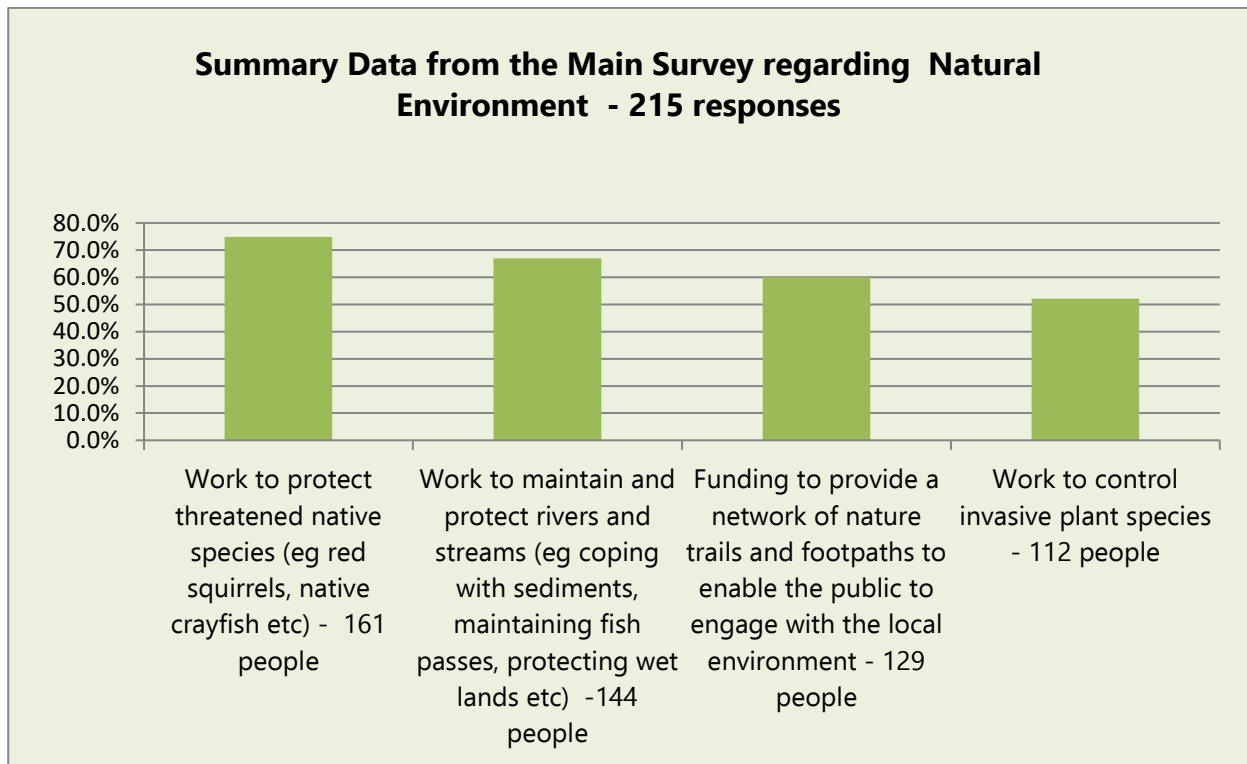
Social Care for Elderly

At the drop in the needs of the elderly were mentioned with regard to transport, three people suggested there was a need for a day centre or over 60s club, one mentioned that churches were important as a source of support for the elderly and three felt there was a need for affordable housing for the elderly. Only 3 or 4 comments were received about older people's needs through the survey. However, this theme was raised by most of those people who were interviewed to join the community panel.

First Aid Training and Training in Use of Defibrillators

It was suggested that it would be useful to provide local training in the use of defibrillators and general first aid to ensure that people have quick access to first aid, given the distance from accident and emergency services. They would be willing to host such training and invite other members of the public to join them. Several other comments in the main survey also suggested provision of more defibrillators and of training to use them.

Natural Environment



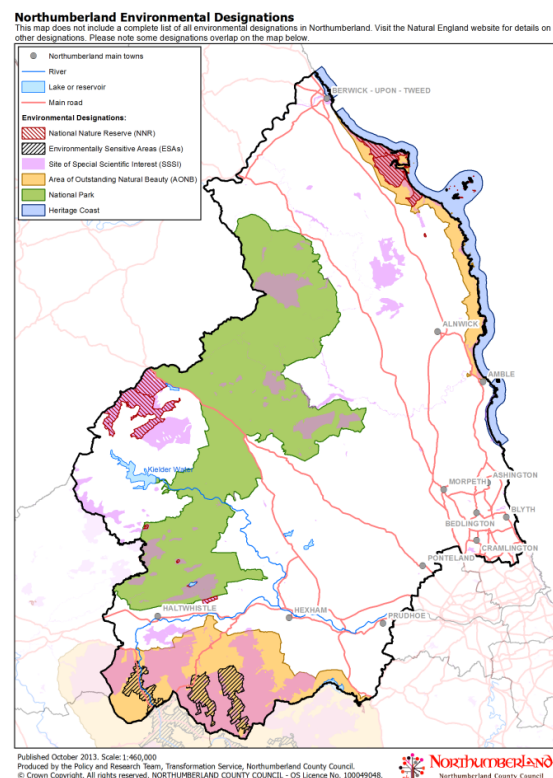
Much of the background evidence on this theme has been presented as a single section as the information is relevant across all the issues.

Northumberland County Council Website asserts that the County has ‘a very special natural environment’^{xiv}, and there are three protected landscapes within the county, including Northumberland National Park, The Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty <http://www.northumberlandcoastonb.org/> and the North Pennines area of Outstanding Natural Beauty <http://www.northpennines.org.uk/>. Maintaining this environment is fundamental to many of the plans for the area, being seen as a way of providing local opportunities relating to:

- Employment and the economy of the area (with tourism being a major local industry)
- Public health (contact with nature has been widely demonstrated to have health benefits)
- Recreation
- Meeting targets on reducing carbon emissions.

The area around the Ray Wind Farm includes part of the National Park, and other areas which might be seen as a gateway to the park. There are also a number of ‘Sites of Special Scientific Interest’ (SSSI’s) mainly within the park. Northumberland Wildlife Trust

manages a number of nature reserves in the area including Little Harle Pasture near Kirkwhelpington, Goose’s Nest Bluebell Bank near Knowesgate, Mill Burn and Grasslees Burn near Elsdon, and Fontburn Reservoir near Cambo.



Many organisations are involved in a partnership which produced the Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan of 2008^{xv} setting out priority areas for work to protect the natural environment in the county. Partners leading on specific measures within the plan include NCC, The National Park, The Forestry Commission, Natural England, the two AONBs, RSPB, The National Trust, Northumbrian Water, Northumberland Bat Group, The Game and Wildlife Conservation Group, Butterfly Conservation, The Environment Agency, Northumberland Wild Life Trust, and Save Our Squirrels.

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis within conservation circles on developing 'Living Landscapes' rather than focusing conservation efforts on single species or small nature reserves. It is recognised that species often need to move beyond a small area to survive and to have the opportunities to prevent the degeneration of gene pools.

There was considerable interest at both the drop in and through the responses to the main survey in work to protect the natural environment. Several people commented that as wind farms have an environmental impact, this would be a particularly appropriate use of the fund. A small number of people expressed an opinion that the needs of the human population of the area should be prioritised over those of the natural environment, and suggested that adequate funding is available elsewhere for environmental issues.

Possible Community Approaches and Sources of Help

There is potential for a wide range of small local projects on environmental issues, including forming local groups to monitor, protect and raise awareness of endangered species, developing local areas to protect nature from wildlife projects in grave yards and school grounds, and creating small local reserves, which could provide extra protection for wildlife and create educational and recreational opportunities for local people and visitors. Local landlords may be interested in more extensive work.

Local projects would be best advised to link with existing work to ensure that they meet current best practice and are able to contribute to joined-up thinking. The National Park could be a key player in supporting local plans. Advice and support may be available from any of the partners in the Biodiversity Action Plan named above, as well as others working in the area such as Northumberland Rivers Trust and Tynedale Rivers Trust. Practical support is also available from Groundwork NE and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Other funding sources include specific funds at the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Tesco's Bags of Help, funds associated with local quarries and many more.

Protecting Threatened Native Species (eg Red Squirrels, Native Crayfish etc)

Community Views

There was just one comment regarding native crayfish at the drop-in but 161 people supported this theme in the questionnaire, making this the third most popular priority overall. Two or three comments were received about the need to protect and restore habitats as well as individual species. One person also expressed a concern that introducing more paths and bridleways could have a negative impact on threatened species and habitats. Another emphasised the need to consult experts to ensure the right interventions take place. A third suggested this should be linked to investment in businesses to act as stewards

Background Information

NCC's website highlights 6 species found in Northumberland that require high levels of protection, namely bats, otters, great crested newts, red squirrels, freshwater pearl mussels and water voles. The biodiversity plan identifies a far more extensive range of species, together with the habitats on which they depend. Projects already exist to support many of these. A number of local groups exist to protect particular species – for instance Squirrel Groups and Bat Groups, affiliated to regional and national conservation charities.

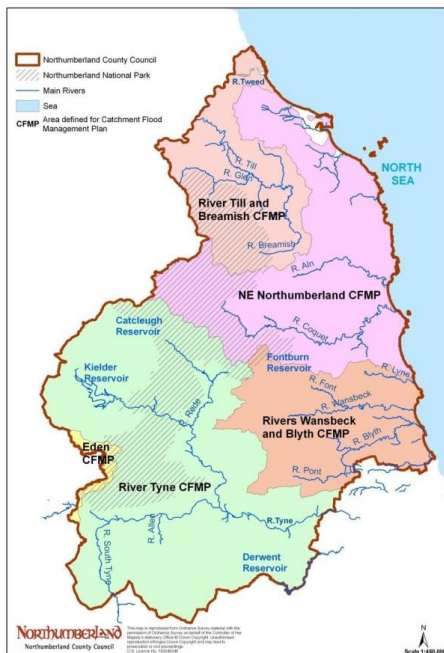
Maintaining and Protecting Rivers and Streams (eg Coping with Sediments, Maintaining Fish Passes, Protecting Wet Lands etc)

Community Views

4 Comments were received regarding protecting rivers at the drop-in event and 144 people supported this theme in the main survey. There were several comments regarding the benefits of ensuring rivers are kept

clean and unblocked which included contributing to reducing flood risk, and helping to protect threatened species and habitats. There were also suggestions that more pathways and footbridges should be provided along rivers in order to provide recreational opportunities and to support tourism.

Background Information



As this map from the Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy^{xvi} showing the main rivers in Northumberland illustrates, the 10km area around the Ray Wind Farm includes catchment areas for more than one of Northumberland’s main rivers. The West of the area is part of the catchment area for the River Tyne being crossed by the North Tyne and River Rede with their many tributaries. Much of the Eastern part of the area is within the catchment for the River Wansbeck. Some peripheral parts of the area may also come within catchments for the River Coquet and River Pont.

Many of the environmental agencies detailed in the overview of this section on the natural environment, have a role in managing these rivers. Two charitable trusts exist specifically to protect rivers within the area: The Tyne Rivers Trust works on the catchment area for the Tyne (shown in green), and the Northumberland Rivers Trust protects all the other river catchments between the Tyne and the Tweed.

Funding to Provide a Network of Trails and Footpaths to Enable the Public to Engage with the Local Environment

Community Views

At the drop-in event, 3 people suggested creating nature trails and riverside pathways. In the main survey, 129 people agreed with this suggestion. There is also a theme in the Infrastructure section of this report on rights of way including pavements, footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways. Since many of the issues are similar – this theme has been dealt with in that section.

Work to Control Invasive Plant Species

Community Views

This idea was raised by two people at the drop-in event and was supported by 112 people through the main survey.

Background

Invasive plant species can be a threat to natural habitats, competing with native plant species, which may in turn be essential to the survival of animal species within the local ecology. Northumberland Local Development Plan – Core Strategy Habitats Regulation Assessment Scoping Report May 2012^{xvii} identifies four invasive plants of particular concern in Northumberland:

- Pirri-pirri bur and spartina primarily affecting coastal areas
- Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed which displace native river bank vegetation.

The Tyne Rivers Trust carries out work to control Japanese Knotweed within the Tyne Catchment Area and Northumberland Rivers Trust has identified controlling invasive species as a need within their plans for the Coquet.

Other Suggestions Regarding the Natural Environment

Suggestions from the main survey included:

- Managing trees, hedges and verges better (keeping them cut or planting new as needed)
- Improving the appearance of villages and supporting wildlife by managing village greens and creating wild flower areas
- Using areas of waste land to create wildlife areas with bird hides, information boards etc.
- Conservation work and public access to view wildlife at the wind farm site.

Other Themes

One or two issues emerged through the course of the Community Engagement which didn't fit neatly into any of the main themes. These have not been covered in detail but the Steering Group may wish to bear them in mind.

The Arts and Culture

There was no specific question about the arts and culture as this did not emerge as a strong theme from the drop in day. However, some of the other issues include aspects of cultural significance and a number of specific comments were received. These included:

- Development of local heritage centres and visitors centres at churches
- Provision of heritage trails and church trails
- Funding an annual festival for the area celebrating local culture
- Funding to safeguard the future of local traditions, history and music
- Many of the recreational activities suggestions related to arts and culture including provision of art and music classes, drama groups, choirs etc.

Banking Facilities

- One or two people suggested provision of a cash point
- One person suggested provision of a credit union

Parish Plans

One person suggested that funding should be available to support Parishes to carry out parish plans and another suggested that parishes should be required to carry these out in order to access funding.

Crime Prevention

- One person mentioned the idea of starting a neighbourhood watch, and referred to theft of farm equipment such as quad bikes
- The only other reference to crime was related to speeding and dangerous driving.

Conclusions

Geographical Area of Benefit

A significant majority of respondents to the survey agreed that the area within a 10km radius of the wind farm represented a sensible area of benefit for the wind farm, providing the best possible balance between:

- a desire to ensure that those communities most affected by the development should benefit most from the fund, and
- a practical concern that the area of benefit should be of sufficient size to be able to make good use of the level of funding on offer.

However, it is worth noting that almost a quarter of respondents felt that the funding should be available county wide, and a number of comments were received suggesting that funding could be made available to projects located in neighbouring areas where these could demonstrate a clear benefit for communities within the 10km radius.

The Steering Group may wish to implement the 10km radius area of benefit but retain some flexibility to review this as the fund develops and it becomes clear what level of demand for funding exists within the area, and to consider applications from outside the area that have a significant local impact.

Vision

The results of the community engagement suggest that the local community have a broad and ambitious vision as to the impact the fund could make in the local area. A broad range of themes emerged, and local people saw potential to support interventions at a wide range of levels including funding community wide initiatives, but also directly supporting community groups, businesses and individuals.

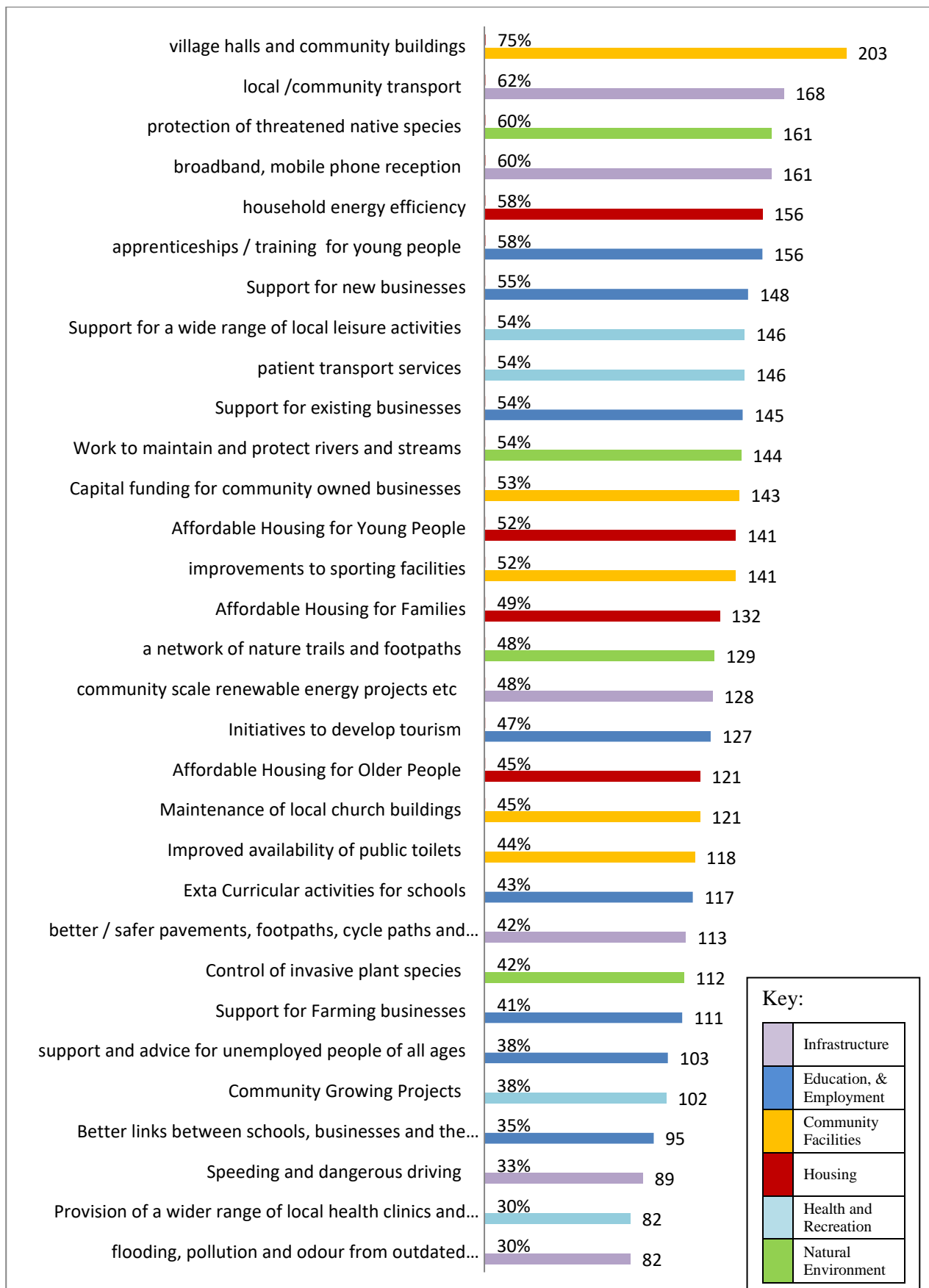
The general survey was designed, based on the responses received at the drop in day, and as a result people were asked for their views on 31 potential priorities considered under 6 general themes. They were also given the chance to suggest additional priorities.

The responses to the survey suggest that the priorities arising from the drop-in day were a good reflection of local views. Every priority received support from at least 30% of respondents, and only a very small number of additional ideas came forward. No single theme emerged as particularly significant. As the chart below shows, priorities from every theme are represented in the top 10 most supported.

The priorities that have emerged allow for a wide range of initiatives which vary greatly in terms of complexity. The top ten priorities range from the most simple: low cost local recreational activities which local people can deliver themselves quite quickly, to the most complex: which may require matched funding from other sources, significant input from expert partners and which may take some time to achieve such as improving broad-band provision across the whole area of benefit.

The overall ranking of priorities is shown in the chart on the next page.

Overall Ranking of Priorities Emerging from the General Survey (does not include results from Drop INS, young farmers, youth group consultations)



Other Concerns

Comments received reflected two main areas of concern about how the fund is to be managed:

Achieving Value for Money

The community generally recognised that the fund will bring an unprecedented level of funding into the area and represents a great opportunity for improving local life. Those taking part in the consultations were concerned that the fund should be managed carefully to achieve maximum impact. It was suggested that the panel should apply the following principles:

- The fund should not be used to replace other income sources, particularly statutory funding
- Wherever possible the fund should complement these sources and be used to lever other funds into the area
- The local steering group should ensure that they have all the skills they need to make good decisions, and are able to fairly represent all parts of the area and interest groups
- The local steering group should put robust assessment criteria in place to ensure projects are well managed, realistic, based on best practice. The level of assessment should be appropriate to the size and type of project
- The local steering group should consider an approach to risk management – in particular in relationship to supporting new and untried initiatives / businesses

Local Capacity

There was a concern that there was not sufficient capacity locally to deliver some of the more ambitious priorities. The steering group may wish to consider proactively identifying some projects and putting these out to tender to attract organisations with relevant skills and expertise to work within the area.

Possible Approaches

In order to address the high level of expectation, and the wide ranging priorities emerging from the consultation, the steering group may wish to

1. Further analyse the priorities in order to achieve some quick wins to make an immediate impact, whilst also identifying a realistic approach to supporting some of the more complex ambitions. Use of a matrix such as the one below can be a useful starting point.

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Straight forward (small grants, local people can deliver without much support)			
Medium complexity (larger grants, local people may can deliver with some support)			
Complex (need additional funding from elsewhere, & significant input from expert partners)			

2. May initially wish to designate pots of funding for different purposes – (which can be reviewed as the fund develops)
 - small grants, with a simple application process for straightforward projects
 - larger grants, with a more thorough application process egg for more complex projects
 - bursaries for individuals
 - business grants and loans
 - dedicating funding to build local capacity

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