

Coxhoe



Community Partnership

Working to make Coxhoe a better place



**Coxhoe Community Partnership
September Quarterly Report 2014-2015
What we did last summer**

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Introduction

Coxhoe Community Partnership is now in its 19th year and continues to strive to make Coxhoe a better place in which to live and work. While we only have a small number of Members, by involving ourselves in the village and wider district we still influence positive developments in the community. Partnership working is often slow in delivery and most of the projects in which we have been involved are ongoing. This Annual Report sets out our work and achievements over the last year and outlines what we have achieved in helping to make Coxhoe a better place.

Membership of the Community Partnership is low. Members of the Partnership have been instrumental in working to help sustain futures for the Active Life Centre and Coxhoe Village Hall so most of their volunteering time has been devoted to those particular causes. While we have achieved a great deal we could do a lot more if more volunteers came forward to lend a helping hand with their time, skills, knowledge and ideas. The implementation of the 'Big Society' is showing us that fewer services are being delivered by the Unitary Council and it is being left to communities to fend for themselves more and more. We will continue to encourage people to become involved in the Partnership and other aspects of village life.

Background

Coxhoe Community Partnership is a voluntary group working to make Coxhoe an even better place to live and work. We achieve this by helping to identify what is important and what can actually be done to make things better. In determining what is important we have played a key role in the development of consecutive Parish Plans and now use Parish Plan 2 2012-2017 to help set out priorities and focus our activities. The Partnership is a registered charity and our limited funding comes from grant submissions we make, which is maximised by the financial benefits Charity status allows.

The Partnership includes residents of the village together with representatives of Durham County Council and Coxhoe Parish Council. We generally meet once a month in Coxhoe Village Hall on the last Wednesday of the month but most of our effective work is done outside of meetings. This may be a little bit of lobbying but generally it is about getting involved and helping to make things happen.

The Partnership was formed in March 1998 specifically to address the play park but have driven other improvements in the village. It has worked to achieve funding and implement a range of improvement schemes within the village and its surrounding. It has been a key driver in the Limestone LinX project and has been instrumental in helping to facilitate the Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill Parish Plan 2 and helping to sustain the futures of the Active

Life Centre @Coxhoe and Coxhoe Village Hall. It has also been a significant lead in the sustainability of youth services in the village, specifically in relation to the Youth Room based at the Active Life Centre. Finally, the Partnership plays a significant role in communications within the village where members have editorship responsibilities for the development and distribution of the Coxhoe Chronicle and web administration work for Coxhoe Parish Council's website, facebook and twitter accounts

The Partnership has met three times in the three months. The Partnership has continued to be active.

At our last Annual General Meeting, having taken into account the Parish Plan, we set out our priorities as follows;

- Working to implement current projects ;
- Working with the Youth Room to improve youth engagement;
- Working with the Village Hall to help secure a sustainable future; and
- Working in Partnership to improve Coxhoe Park.

This report is a summary of some of its activity over the last three months.

Priority 1: Working to Implement current projects

Village Green Improvement Project (PP2 Coxhoe Action Plan C58)

The partnership has continued to play an important part in the Village Green Working Group. Work on the first main phase was completed in the quarter with the formal opening taking place on Durham Gala day on 12th July. The Partnership has promoted the scheme in the Coxhoe Chronicle and on the Parish Council Community website and facebook page. A new gallery of photographs recording the implementation of the scheme and the opening ceremony was completed and published on the website in 'Our Gallery'. The Partnership recommenced Working Group meetings as part of its meeting on 24th September.



Village Signage (PP2 Coxhoe Action Plan C57)

The Partnership is working on a scheme for improved village signage. It is to make its own application for funding as this is considered to be the best way of taking the matter forward. Progress has been hampered due to other commitments of Partnership members. However in July a draft document consultation was agreed and consultations were commenced. The Parish Council, County Councillors and the County Council was formally consulted. Consultation with the general public was commenced with articles in the September editions of the Coxhoe Chronicle, community website and Parish Council facebook sites. A manned exhibition took place on 24th September and an unmanned exhibition will run until late October.

Priority 2: Working with the Youth Room to improve youth engagement. (PP2 Policy 5, Coxhoe Action Plan C5/C6/C23-25)

Youth Partnership Agreement

Members of the Partnership have taken an active role in a series of meetings with the County Council and the AAP aimed at developing a strategy for improved services for children and young people including the development of a Youth Forum. Partnership members are actively assisting the Parish Council in preparing a funding application for a youth engagement project for 13-19 year olds.

Priority 3: Working in Partnership to improve Coxhoe Park (PP2 Coxhoe Action Plan C63)

How we can take Coxhoe Park forward

The Partnership has discussed ways on how Coxhoe Park and the Sensory Garden can be sustained in the future. During the year Durham County Council has been carrying out a review of fixed play. It has been agreed that the best time to take this priority further is when this review has been complete. A report to the County Councils cabinet is expected in October.



Priority 4: Working with the Village Hall to secure a sustainable future (PP2 Policy 4, Coxhoe Action Plan C9-11)

Village Hall Update and Partnership matters

Partnership members have taken a significant role in Managing the sustained future of Coxhoe Village Hall. This has included significant improvements to the decoration of the Main Hall and upstairs rooms. The Partnership agreed in May to provide a grant of £1,000 to the Village Hall to contribute to cost of the work that has been undertaken, this was released to the Village Hall and a letter of thanks was received from the Association together with a public thank you in the September edition of the Coxhoe Chronicle.

Other Issues

Governance

The Partnership has its own governance arrangements and provides members with formal agendas and resulting minutes of each meeting. It had three formal meetings within the quarter. Each meeting receives an up to date treasurer's report in order to achieve high standards of financial management and transparency. Within the quarter the Partnership agreed to make its minutes publicly available and these now appear on the Community Partnership's page on the Community website www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk.

During the quarter the Partnership reviewed its performance against its governance document, its Constitution, and made some improvements to its governance arrangements including publication of minutes indicated above. All members have received a copy of the Constitution and a copy of the audited annual accounts. Thanks go to the Partnerships auditor. In addition, the annual Charity Commission return was submitted and accepted. Copies of the return were provided to all members.

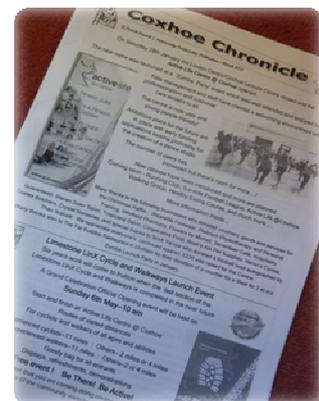
Parish Plan

The Partnership has continued to engage in the implementation of the Parish Plan as demonstrated in this report. It has worked with the Parish Council to agree an annual review of PP2 progress which will take place later in the year and help with the Parish Council's budgeting.

Communications

The Partnership prepared and delivered with other volunteers another packed edition of the Coxhoe Chronicle in September. This takes a significant amount of time to prepare and deliver but always appears to be well received by residents. We await, the acquisition by the Parish Council of a photocopier capable of printing the Chronicle quickly and efficiently in house and hope the Parish can speedily expedite this item.

In addition the Partnership has continued to keep up to date the Community website (www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk) which is full of information about what is happening in and around Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill. This remains to be Durham County Council's 'flagship' community website. In addition volunteers administer the Parish Councils facebook and twitter accounts. The website regularly has around 900-1000 vistors a month. Full details of performance are available on the Audit and Risks pages of the web site. At the end of August , for example, the website had over 1,000 visits, over 2,500 page views and about 750 visitors.



There was a significant amount of work undertaken to maintain the website in the quarter as a result of major planning applications, new versions of newsletters and community calendar, new consultations and events and the completion of the village green project. The village green album in the Gallery was completed following the formal launch and a new album recording Coxhoe's Classic Car night (photo on front cover) was completed.

There were over 800 'friends' on the Parish facebook site at the end of the quarter. While there are control issues with facebook it is a powerful means of communication and, as

community response to the Village Green improvements promoted on the page shows, it is a good tool to take a snap shot of community reaction. Facebook, however, had become a significant focus for parish (and County) service requests and this is was taking up a significant amount of the Partnerships voluntary administrator's time. During the quarter the Parish Council agreed to jointly monitor the facebook site and deal with service request posts at source. This was launched on 1st September.

In November 2014 the Partnership launched the Coxhoe Community Calendar which is aimed at helping people plan events without conflict with dates while letting the wider community know what is on and when. The Community Calendar is kept up to date and has been well received. The latest update was issues at the end of August.



In addition to the above the Partnership has:

- received regular reports and updates on progress at the Active Life Centre;
- made representations in respect of a further 3 important planning applications in the and around the village including Bogma Hall Farm, the Limes and Parkhill;
- Queried with the AAP how Coxhoe Young people may be adequately represented on the AAP Youth Forum including access to funding, receiving a full response;
- Submitted a grant application for new display boards for community use;
- Requested the County Council to consult the Community Partnership on any Traveller proposals or options in the area, and
- Raised concerns with the County Council in respect of the state of the Old Church School house and the land adjacent Bower Court and around the new replacement railway gates with responses to both issues being received.

Conclusions

I believe it is clear from the achievements set out above how much Coxhoe Community Partnership has been in helping to improve and sustain our community. For a small voluntary organisation it has done a vast amount not only to encourage physical improvements but to foster community spirit and responsibility. It will continue to do this but it needs new members and new volunteers with new skills and ideas to build on what it has achieved to date. At the moment the Partnership is being sustained by a group of 'usual suspects' whose available time is being overly stretched.

Ian Forster

Chair, Coxhoe Community Partnership.