

NEWTOWN COMMUNITY AGM 19.10.2013 GENERAL COMMITTEE REPORT

I am pleased to report that since the last AGM in January, the Association has had a very busy and positive year. There have been five themed cafe events, the biggest being the first ever Newtown Community Food Festival in September which was a great success and attended by approximately 250 people. Around a dozen local food establishments took part in the event which was granted permission and given funding by Exeter City Council.

Other themed events have included a wildlife cafe in conjunction with Devon Wildlife Trust, a musical cafe led by the Newtown Community Association Choir which also featured Brazilian dance , an art cafe led by Exeter Scrapstore, and a local history cafe with guided walk. I thank everyone who have led and been part of all these important community events. Before the end of the year we still have the fourth annual Halloween event to look forward to, which takes place a week today, previous Halloween events have attracted in the region of 400 visitors. Plus, we have the Community Craft Fayre in November and the Winter Warmer in

December.

In addition to these themed cafes, the monthly social cafes have proved a great success with a consistent number of local residents attending. The cafe has included a trip to Ide Farm where there was the opportunity to make apple juice as well as eating pumpkin soup. The people who go to the Social Cafe suggested that it would be good to have a chance to try Tai Chi or Qigong. A trial class was therefore arranged and it was so enjoyed that there is now a Qigong session every week on a Thursday in the hut led by Joe Salmon from Tai Chi Nation for whom we are extremely thankful.

The NCA Choir continues to attract new members, in fact it is believed that new members have come forward after each of their public performances which have included at Clevedon Court, the Newstock Music Night at the Moosehall, as well as their biggest gig yet at the Respect Festival. I would like to thank Emma Welton for her wonderful leadership of the choir.

Once again we were pleased to offer accommodation to the Respect Festival at their event in June which this year attracted a record attendance of 22,000 to Belmont Park.

The NCA Committee meets nearly every month, with seven open meetings having taken place since February. This together with sub-groups means we have all been

kept busy. All meetings and sub-committees are open to everyone and the Committee really needs your involvement.

At each public meeting we prioritise a report from the police and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Community PCSO's, Kate Rees and Nic Unsworth. They continue to provide a friendly line of communication between the community and the Police.

We have been very fortunate in 2013 to receive a number of grants for the many projects undertaken. Exeter City Council again kindly granted us the money to cover the cost of rent in respect of the hut. Our thanks go to our Exeter City Council for their £300 grant in respect of the Social Cafe, and Devon & Cornwall Constabulary for their two grants totalling £500 which was for the Social Cafe and Social Cafe related activities such as the visit to Ide Farm and Qigong.

We also thank our Devon County Councillor Richard Westlake for his £100 grant in respect of the Newstock community music evening at the Moosehall. Councillor Westlake also assisted the Sensory Garden Project with £1000 funding which has gone towards the payment for the artwork on the new sign with the remaining amount to go towards phase 2 of that particular project. Construction firm Morgan Sindall who built the Printworks student development on Western Way paid for the sign to be made by Signs Express.

General hut enhancements to the hut have been made possible by funding from Devon & Cornwall Constabulary totalling £650, plus a £1500 disability enhancement grant from Devon County Council.

The Vision Project, for the new building, has been ably assisted by the following: a £4,300 Devon County Council grant for surveying, a £5,310 Exeter City Council grant, and a separate grant from Exeter City Council from the New Home Bonus scheme totalling £861.90.

The association has also been assisted in other ways, Guardian Security provided us when we were encountering problems with the main door of the hut which was above and beyond that would be normally expected. The help from Exeter University is also much appreciated. The link between NCA and the University is an extremely important one, and has become ever more so with the opening of the new Printworks development. The assistance that we have been given in respect of the annual daffodil planting, and especially the Halloween events are greatly appreciated. We hope that students will be able to help us next week as others have in the last couple of years. We thank Rory Cunningham for his assistance and we welcome the new University wardens including Gabrielle and Sam who both attended our last meeting, as well as all of the new in-take who have become residents of Newtown.

The calendar records of hut users has revealed that since

1st January 2013 until this morning (19 October) the hut has been used 647 times. The hut is booked a further 27 times until the end of the month which would result in the hut being used 674 times over 10 months. Based on the average number of times the hut is used we can estimate that the hut will have been used approximately 800 times in 2013 by the end of the year. We have had 126 occasional bookings from January 2013 to present time plus 4 already for 2014. We have about 23 regular paying hirers plus use of the hut for NCA events.

The introduction of an e-newsletter 'Newtown News' has allowed everyone on the NCA mailing list to find out what is happening both at NCA and also elsewhere in Newtown. We thank organisations such as The Globe (for their regular articles), The Scrapstore, Merry Go Round Toy Library, James at Fresh Painting & Decorating, as well as everybody else who have contributed the newsletter. In addition we are also now on Facebook (Newtown Community Events) and have more than 120 followers on Twitter (Newtown Community).

Away from the hut, and, the community planting carried out in December 2012 with assistance from members of the community, local Police Officers, and University wardens, resulted in bouquets of daffodils which brightened up Springtime at the bottom of Clifton Street.

Britain's first public garden for the blind in Britain, and

possibly the world, was marked with the installation of a sign showing the importance of the garden. The sign, which included a braille translation, was the first phase of a project by NCA to enhance and publicise the Sensory Garden in Belmont Park. In September the association were proud to have the sign unveiled by the Lord Mayor who was accompanied by the Lord Mayor's Consort, Newtown's very own Saxon Spence. The project team are working in close conjunction with the owners of Exeter City Council and will hopefully be meeting up with the Parks Department again in the not too distant future.

The Sensory Garden Project was one of many topics discussed at the community meetings during the year. Other main topics have included organising the various events, various grants and funding opportunities, health and safety, food and hygiene, the choir, social cafe and Qigong.

The major project that was discussed at meetings was the ongoing project for a new community building to replace the current hut, 'The Vision'. Recent developments have included the signing of an agreement, with the approval of NCA members at meetings, with Exmouth based grant finder company, 'Granted'. They have a very impressive pedigree and are confident that they will be able to find the money for NCA's new building. They will be providing NCA a monthly update, and will be attending NCA meetings at

least every three months. Their first grant application will be to secure a grant of £100,000 from Exeter City Council.

The AGM is an ideal time to say thank you. On behalf of NCA I would like to propose a vote of thanks to everyone who has helped us this year:

(In no particular order):

As always our heartfelt thanks are due to our three tireless councillors, Devon County Councillor Richard Westlake, and our two Exeter City Councillors, Councillor Richard Branston and Councillor Roger Spackman. All three of them show a reliable and constant presence in the community, have supported NCA with grants where possible and have extremely supportive of The Vision Project.

Derek Burnside, our Treasurer who always keeps the accounts in order and also orders supplies for the hut.

Jackie Holdstock, our Bookings Secretary, for whom the community association really could not operate. Jackie has daily contact with all hirers of the hut and has forged strong relationships with our many regular users.

Su Aves. Her tremendous hard work with regards to the weekly QiGong sessions and monthly social cafes, both of which are really important activities and events for the community. Su's high organisational skills are invaluable. The food festival was Su's idea and which

was a huge success.

Michael Parrott, our Publicity Officer. Michael has forged a close link with Express & Echo and has written several joint press releases with external organisations that have assisted NCA. He has also set up and runs the e-newsletter, 'Newtown News' and runs the Twitter feeds.

Peter Montgomery our website editor and music coordinator who also set up the community choir. The musical acts have greatly assisted the Sunday cafes.

Lynn Chipperfield, our devoted cleaner, who against all the odds has made the hut cleaner that it has been in years. Lynn unfortunately on too frequent an occasion has to deal with things that is not a cleaner's job. We really appreciate the job that Lynn carries out.

Elena Milego, who has set up the Facebook page. Elena has also been paramount to the success of the cafes by often leading the cafes.

We would like to thank all of the other kitchen helpers and leaders, again in no particular order, these have included Sally and Steve, Polly, Joan, Lesley, Marina, Kat, George, and many more including people that we have already mentioned. We also thank George for his support to Su with regards to the social cafes.

NCA's Property Trustees, Joan Bond, Peter Morgan and Rory McNeile.

An AGM is an important event for any organisation and this one is an extremely important one for NCA as it is at a time of change for the association. Since January our secretary Gay Smith stepped down after seven years of hard work for the community. We all deeply appreciate all of the work that Gay has provided to NCA during her terms as secretary.

We are extremely thankful to Carrie Davis for her hard and conscientious work whilst serving as Secretary, despite her personal circumstances, in the interim period since June when Gay stepped down from the role. We hope that Carrie will be able to help NCA in the future when she is able.

Rory McNeile has been a valuable and hard working addition to the committee and has provided useful contributions to the association, in particular since the current Chair Ian Harrison announced that he would stepping down from the role prior to his extended holiday down under. Rory has courageously stepped into the breach by putting his name forward to be the next chair and has worked in conjunction with Ian in recent months leading up to today's AGM.

Finally, the successful continuation of Newtown Community Association is dependant on increasing the number of active members who are willing to help with the work of the committee and the number of events. The current small committee results in those volunteers being hard-pressed and are keen for as much as

assistance from other residents as possible especially during this period of change at the association. Please speak to your neighbours and friends in the area and encourage them to come to meetings, make suggestions and even to join the committee where they live.