

## **ALSTON MOOR COMMUNITY PLAN 2018**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Alston Moor is a small community with big ideas. We are far from any major settlements and our history is one of self-sufficiency by necessity. Over the centuries, the ways in which that is manifested has, of course, changed, as has the demographic of residents, but the factors which contribute to our resilience and community spirit are not so different from those of 300 years ago. Throughout this period, people have moved here and moved away, whether for work or other reasons, and a tradition of welcoming and including new people, of accepting difference, has been important to the strength of the community as it faces changing times and contexts.

The purpose of this Community Plan is to provide a collective vision for the future of Alston Moor; a framework to ensure that Alston Moor can continue to be a great place to live and work over the next 5-10 years. We recognise the varying needs of people of different ages, backgrounds and interests, and the intention of the Plan is to enable a good future for everyone here now and those joining us in the coming years.

There are significant challenges in the present that are different in detail from those of the past, but not entirely unrelated. Whether we are thinking about housing, transport, communication, jobs, tourism, healthcare, education, social events, sustainable fuel and energy supplies, or anything else, we need to base our plan on today's realities and think how we want things to work in the future – but these issues are not new to Alston Moor. The challenges have been dealt with before, and will be again, in ways appropriate to the current time.

#### Process

The creation of this Plan has been made possible through the work and contribution of many people from all over Alston Moor. We (members of the Alston Moor Partnership who volunteered to help) began with initial meetings with a range of groups that meet for various purposes, where we asked what people most liked and disliked about living here and what they thought might make things worse or better. This gave us our key themes. We then worked to gain deeper information and thoughts on these issues through meetings with particular interest groups, open mornings in Alston Town Hall and Nenthead Community Shop, invitations to give views online, conversations in various contexts, and a house-to-house survey [to come].

*Following circulation of this first draft (which will take place before all consultation methods have been completed), we will gain feedback through meetings in Garrigill, Nenthead and Alston where – we hope! – people will come and tell us what's right and what's wrong, so that a revised and eventually 'final' Community Plan can be published.*

## CORE ISSUES

**At the heart of our future is the need to maintain a community here – if people leave because their lives are not ‘working’ for them, then nothing else in the Plan is meaningful.** The population is as low as it has ever been, merely a quarter of what it was about 200 years ago, and on the edge of viability for various services. We know that there are factors working against people staying in or moving into the area. What complicates this is that all the various factors depend on each other – it is not possible to work on one issue, then the next, in some clear step-by-step manner. To add to that, climate change and the need to work towards sustainability in relation to fuel, materials and our natural environment put further demands on future plans. We need to address all the issues and keep referring to and fro among the various points. The key ones are as follows:

- *employment* – a range of ways to earn a living, whether through job opportunities with an employer on Alston Moor, within a distance people are willing to travel or through self-employment
- *housing* – affordable accommodation (whether to rent or buy), of a good standard, easy and cheap to heat (as far as possible using renewable methods), with many including a workshop or office space for self-employment
- *communication* – broadband and mobile signal available everywhere across Alston Moor, so that business and personal connections can be easily made
- *environmental sustainability* – our future plans must work towards becoming carbon neutral and non-wasteful in our use of resources; without such changes, the community will be unable to maintain itself as both climate and resource availability change
- *biodiversity and conservation values* – our landscape and natural environment forms the surroundings within which all else takes place; our area is part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the way our land is managed is of importance locally and nationally
- *quality of life* – although this is a rather amorphous concept, we nonetheless recognise when there is a sense of wellbeing among the population, with a good environment (both physical and social) and a sense of community engagement; and this is a key issue, and essential for the community to survive and grow.

If all these issues were addressed/solved, we would be able to grow our community, and could be more confident about the continuation of services such as schools, healthcare, and social care. Additionally, there would be a larger pool of people to participate in and help the many groups and activities to keep going; to spend money in the shops and pubs; and to offer accommodation and activities for visitors (who are needed contributors to the local economy). Of course, it is also true that we need all those things to be happening in order to attract people to come and live and work here... so the interdependency of each aspect of the Plan is only too clear!!

## **CONTEXT**

Alston Moor does not, of course, exist in a vacuum. As well as lying within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it comes under the mantle of both Eden District Council (EDC) and Cumbria County Council (CCC). The policies of these bodies are the context within which we form our activities and efforts. Where relevant, policy documents and statements from these bodies will be referenced using those initials.

### Local authorities

CCC and EDC, in common with other County and District Councils, and Unitary Authorities, in England, have had their central government funding reduced considerably over the last eight years, meaning that they are no longer in a position to undertake as much non-essential or non-statutory work as they once did. However, CCC retains statutory (required) responsibility for education, children's services, adult social care and the roads in our area (major roads like the M6, A66 and A69 are the responsibility of Highways England) as well as non-vehicular rights-of-way (footpaths and bridleways). It also is responsible for waste management, although EDC is responsible for waste collection. EDC also deals with planning applications. Both authorities also have a range of other responsibilities.

### AONB

The AONB Partnership's primary purpose is to conserve and enhance the landscape, taking into account the needs of agriculture and other land-based industries and the communities within its boundaries. They play a rôle in planning and produce planning guidelines and a building design guide, alongside running a wide range of projects covering geology (the AONB is also a Geopark), biodiversity, and various environmental topics.

### Parish council

Alston Moor Parish Council is our most immediate and local form of statutory authority. It can raise money through the local precept in order to undertake work that it wishes to do for the benefit of the community, but does not have required responsibilities like the district and county council.

### Alston Moor Greenprint

A project through Cumbria Action for Sustainability, the Greenprint has run in parallel with the development of the Community Plan. It aims to stimulate and encourage sustainability, in all its aspects, throughout Alston Moor.

### Neighbourhood Plan

During the course of development of the Community Plan, the Parish Council has begun investigating whether to develop a Neighbourhood Plan to complement the EDC Local Plan.

### **And after all that....**

**The rest is down to us, local people, to do through voluntary action or by applying for and gaining grants to enable particular projects to be undertaken. That is what this Community Plan is all about.**

First Draft

## OUR PLAN AND POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Within each **main section**, the particular areas of focus are outlined under in **sub-sections** a, b, c etc. Each sub-section provides a general outline of the **area of focus (A)**, followed by a broad sense of **what is needed (B)**, and some **specific actions (C)** that are appropriate and relevant at the time of publication. These action points should not be seen as definitive. The context changes with remarkable rapidity, and new opportunities emerge while others disappear. The crucial issues for each are encapsulated in sections A and B and new actions may fulfil these more effectively than the ones identified in each section C.

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## **SECTION I: MAINTAINING AND GROWING A COMMUNITY**

### **(a) Uniting a community**

#### **A. Area of focus**

When we undertook the first stage of consultation for this Plan, it was notable that virtually every group said something indicating that the sense of community was a key factor in what made Alston Moor a good place to live. How to maintain and increase that sense of community and its cohesion is therefore an extremely important part of the Plan, since a good quality of life is the essential core to the purpose of the Plan.

Historically, community cohesion came as a natural consequence of many people working in one particular industry (mining, farming, or often both) or for one of a few large employers (e.g. London Lead Company, Vieille Montagne Company, Rotherhope Fell Mine Company, the foundry) and as members of the churches and chapels on Alston Moor. These no longer play a central rôle in the life of everyone in the community, and other collective experiences have taken their place.

Most often cited as a major factor in the sense of community now are the events, annual and more frequent, that bring people together.

It is also true that a threat to Alston Moor unites people, whether that be a plan to close a school, to remove hospital beds etc or an event like flooding or major snowfall which results in people rallying round to help their neighbours. However, none of us want threats of any sort, so while a sense of community does indeed grow from such incidents, it is not one we would wish to rely on to maintain community cohesion!! We need to be pro-active rather than reactive.

#### **B. What is needed**

Among the issues seen as militating against the maintenance of the community-enhancing events are: a lack of volunteers willing to take on the hard work of organising and running them; the difficulty of ensuring that everyone knows about each event; and the sense that people from one place do not always support events in a different place (Alston, Nenthead, Garrigill).

Events and their maintenance rely on attention to several issues:

- new members/volunteers needed, for many of the major events, including both planning group and 'on the day' volunteers (which are often hard for established volunteer-based organisations to find)

- new ideas needed for events – new volunteers could contribute
  - how different events relate to each other (e.g. Flower and Produce Show, and the Industrial Tent at the Agricultural Show)
  - engaging young people more effectively in events (and other contexts) and ensuring they have a voice
  - finding appropriate funding sources
  - completing the paperwork for potential funding, requiring time and management
  - better marketing both for local people and for visitors/potential visitors, and especially to engage those groups and individuals currently less involved
  - specialist marketing for something that makes money (e.g. the Craft Fair) can be paid for, but this is not viable for most events
  - some events have difficulty raising enough money through ticket/entrance fees and need ongoing funding
  - maintaining positive attitudes towards events so as to maintain enthusiasm and recruit new volunteers
  - ensuring awareness of the considerable benefit to the local economy
  - working with the DBS system when involving younger people
- using all possible means to ensure people know about events, the necessary preparatory work etc – recognising that different people will find out about events through different sources

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
a1	More linking together of activities – an organisation, loose or formally constituted – which could ensure joint marketing as appropriate, sharing of info and dates	Current organisers, with possible help and co-ordination from CCC
a2	Produce an Alston Moor calendar with photographs of different aspects of the area (particularly with people doing things), and local events already marked in for the year.	Someone/a group would need to take on organising this, in the summer before the New Year for which it was designed, so available from early November. Collating the dates, commissioning/finding the photographs, working with a printer, alerting all potential local outlets and making arrangements with them.
a3	Further work on the newly-launched Alston Moor News e-mail, with research concerning its reach and impact, and possible supportive methods to reach those not currently aware of it	Enlarging the small group to help the existing volunteers and undertake research and analysis
a4	A regular flow of publicity through press releases and other means which emphasise the economic benefits of events	A group, probably the same as in (1) above, to provide information as appropriate to someone willing to write and communicate press releases, post to social media, notice and link with other

		potential sources of publicity
a5	Collate extensive and frequently-updated information about funding sources, and ensure people know how to access this information and get help to complete applications	Possible presentation from Tracey Moran of the CCC Eden Local Team; identify someone to offer ongoing help and support
a6	Simplify the plethora of Alston Moor Facebook groups/pages	Those responsible for these groups/pages need to work together to decide on the best possible way to do this, and to ensure that each one ensures the appropriate sharing of each others' posts
a7	Marketing generally (not just for events) through the estate agents, so anyone buying a house got a pack of information about everything – recycling, councillors, events, etc etc	A group, to include at least a representative of those undertaking point 1, to collate relevant information, obtain funding for printing at regular intervals (twice yearly?), liaise with estate agents
a8	Develop ways of identifying potential volunteers, and ways to link organisations needing volunteer support with those people	The parish council has raised money through the precept to develop such a service, which hopefully will be progressed

## **(b) A community for young people**

### **A. Area of focus**

Another comment which was frequently made throughout the consultation was the need to ensure good opportunities – educational, recreational, community engagement, employment – for young people of all ages (we have taken 19 years old as the upper limit in general). No community can be vibrant, dynamic and sustainable without creative, thoughtful and energetic children and young people, and we all are responsible for ensuring that growing up on Alston Moor is a fulfilling experience, recognising that we all benefit from what young people have to offer. In an era of easy online communication, young people are only too aware of what is not available on Alston Moor, and it is important to ensure that we can make their lives not merely 'OK' but something that can be seen as good, and even preferable to what they would find elsewhere.

There has been awareness of the issue for some time, and in recent years a number of initiatives have begun to make better provision for young people, although everyone recognises that much more is needed. What is currently available includes the following organisations and arrangements.

- The youth club provides weekly sessions which are open to young people aged 11-19, on a Friday night each week in Alston. About 20 young people between 11 and 15 years old generally attend currently. The core funding for the two workers comes through Cumbria County Council, and the youth club has also been

supported by the parish council and through charitable donations from the Freemasons and local Co-operative (community giving scheme).

- Strivers (South Tynedale Railway Inclusive Venture for the Education of Railway Staff) provides local young people from 11 to 18 with a youth development scheme which includes a week's work experience for Year 9 students. Groups meet weekly on a Monday after school, and often spend time during weekends and school holidays at the railway.
- Table tennis and table football sessions are held at St Augustine's church on early Tuesday evenings in term-time for nine to 13 year olds, with a more general games and craft evening on Thursdays, occasionally meeting elsewhere to play pool or for outdoor games.
- Girlguiding UK offers meetings on a Monday evening in Alston for girls aged five to 14 years old (Rainbows for five to seven year olds, Brownies for seven to 10, Guides 10-14). There are currently 18 girls attending.
- The Alston Moor and Eden Dance School provides lessons two evenings a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) for young people from three years old to 18. These cover the whole range of dance – tap, ballet, modern, contemporary and street dance – and the young people involved usually keep attending and performing until they leave for university or jobs elsewhere, often participating during summer holidays even after they have left Alston Moor. There are currently 45 children and young people participating, including six in the 16-18 age group.

## **B. What is needed**

There are some obvious gaps and problems with the current provision. Firstly, most providers are in urgent need of volunteers willing to make a regular commitment, in order to support existing volunteers or paid staff, and to take over from those wishing to retire. Secondly, there is relatively little provision for the seven to 10 year olds, and for those over 14. This older group is a concern to many, as without opportunities to develop their skills, creativity, leadership abilities, problem-solving skills, etc, they are not in a position to contribute their energy and ideas to the future of Alston Moor.

One of the key aspirations is to provide a base for children and young people's activities, both organised and not. Designated spaces, for all ages of children and young people, could enable organised and self-generated activities. A number of different rooms providing a quiet or study space, a games room, an art and creative activities space, a dance and drama studio, and an outdoor area (for outdoor games, outdoor learning and gardening), with additional space for an office for adult volunteers and employed youth workers, and storage space for groups and clubs meeting regularly, would enable a far broader range of possibilities, including a more effective youth service, able to meet individual needs. Some sort of a drop-in venue with appropriate adult volunteers available to provide help and support is particularly necessary for the older age group, who probably need a room of their own.

Such a base could establish advice and support on a wide range of issues, including mental, physical and sexual health; drug and alcohol concerns; education and careers; transport difficulties; and to answer other needs as they are identified.

Clearly, for such a base to work effectively, there must be funding, both for youth workers to staff such a facility and offer activities, and for equipment, travel, etc. Additionally, a good number of DBS-checked volunteers is essential, to assist with particular groups, clubs and activities, and to be available for support and advice services as assistants to those with salaries. While it is practical for such a base to be in Alston, ways for young people from Nenthead and Garrigill to participate fully are needed, possibly through a greater number of volunteers willing to drive the community minibus (and DBS-checked).

It is also important that young people can be more fully involved in the life of Alston Moor, and able to make their voices heard. For this reason, a youth council is something people have mentioned, and it would need initiatives from supportive adults as well as young people themselves to make this happen. Given the fact that almost all 16-18 year olds have to go off Alston Moor for the mandatory education or training they are engaged in, special efforts need to be made to enable them to take part in the life of the community. Currently there is no channel that enables this, and a youth council would be valuable for this reason as well as for inclusion of ideas from all children and young people. Alston Moor cannot be a thriving community into the future unless young people are heard and considered in plans.

Concerns are often expressed about the limited possibilities for young people who live on Alston Moor, both in terms of experiencing different environments and activities from what is available here, and in terms of work experience and future jobs. Finding a way to enable more trips to events, activities and situations that they might not otherwise encounter would be valuable for young people. Work experience on Alston Moor (since travel elsewhere can be difficult) would also broaden understandings, and the development of a work experience programme with local businesses would be extremely valuable. The need for apprenticeships is recognised country-wide but is particularly necessary on Alston Moor, to provide an opportunity for those who want to continue to live here as adults and to enable those who might wish to try living elsewhere but are not yet ready to do so. Finding businesses and services able to offer apprenticeships is of key importance.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
b1	Establish a physical base for children and young people	This could come through CCC or EDC, particularly buildings currently owned, or through another body or individual being willing to dedicate part or all of a building to children and young people. Existing youth workers and councillors (CCC and

		EDC) might be the key people.
b2	Establish an effective long-term funding stream for employed youth workers, property rental, activity costs etc.	There may be routes through the Councils, but almost certainly will need other support through grants – needs investigation. Volunteers willing to take on grant search and applications needed!!
b3	Identifying volunteers to help with the various activities	Alston Moor Parish Council has raised precept to support a volunteer co-ordinator – this would be a useful task for the person.
b4	Obtaining DBS certificates for identified volunteers	Hopefully the relevant organisations (CCC, EDC, Girlguiding, etc etc) will be able to put this in motion and fund it
b5	Establish a youth council	Joint working through the youth club, SKS and others
b6	Establish a work experience programme for young people at SKS	Joint working between SKS, AMBA and businesses across Alston Moor
b7	Establish apprenticeships in social care	To be discussed and implemented via the Alston Health Alliance
b8	Investigate and encourage other possible apprenticeships	Liaison between local businesses, Carlisle College, and other parties

### (c) Being good neighbours

#### **A Area of focus**

Having good neighbours is what everyone hopes for. A sense of respect and care ensures a feeling of warmth and good relationships with those who live in one's local area. Every community has problems when people are not considerate of each other, and there are three particular issues frequently mentioned in the course of consultation for this Plan.

It is notable that one of these was mentioned by virtually every child and young person spoken to – namely litter. This is an issue all over Alston Moor, despite the best efforts of several people on both a paid and a voluntary basis (including some who regularly and frequently clear litter from several areas). As is well-known, although some of this litter is certainly the responsibility of visitors, whether in cars, on motorbikes or on bicycles, local people also can be less than careful, often not apparently realising that others find this offensive, and assuming that some magic happens to clear up the mess they create, or failing to realise quite how long it takes some organic material to break down, particularly if from non-native plants. Fly-tipping is an additional problem, occurring on road verges and various other vehicle-accessible places, and getting it dealt with can be difficult, not least when EDC and CCC both have certain responsibilities and identifying whose responsibility any particular incident falls to can be difficult.

Other unpleasant material is also left lying around – dog faeces. This seems to be a persistent issue, no matter how many reminders are put up. Walkers, litter pickers, and children playing, all come across both faeces and plastic bags containing faeces. While the specific legal requirements to bag dog faeces and dispose of the bag properly apply within 200 metres of a road which has a 40 mile per hour limit or less, it is obvious common sense that dog fouling is a problem on any footpath or track, and responsible and ethical dog owners and walkers will want to ensure that no child is exposed to toxocariasis, and no-one has to deal with muck on their shoes.

There was almost no person or group consulted who did not mention the problem of parking in Alston. The central Alston car parking spaces are understandably used by those who live in the middle of the town; but there are also vehicles which appear to be there for very long periods without moving, taking up space which is sorely needed for those coming into Alston from elsewhere on Alston Moor and, of course, those visiting. There is a suggestion that some of these long-term parked vehicles are in fact the responsibility of a business selling cars but whatever the truth of that, entirely stationary vehicles occupying prime parking areas for days or weeks at a time are clearly detrimental to the needs of local businesses whose customers cannot get parked, and we already know that at least some passing visitors, failing to find anywhere to park, simply drive on through without stopping. The Town Benchmarking Report noted that the town centre car parks – i.e. not including Fairhill or the South Tynedale Railway (STR) car parks – had only 2% of spaces free on the ‘busy day’ that was surveyed, and 13% on a quiet day. This compares with the national small towns’ averages of 31% on a busy day and 37% on a quiet day. The problem is evident. Fairhill and STR car parks are not often used, because the steepness of Front Street is seen as a definite problem for many people.

## **B. What is needed**

If we, the local people, never dropped litter, we would be able to do a much better job of ensuring that visitors also behave properly, since litter seems to call to litter, so some form of local education or persuasion might be appropriate. As well as small litter, there is also a problem with illegal fly-tipping. Some of this no doubt occurs because of the costs of disposing of the material properly, and there needs to be thought given, both about enforcing the penalties for fly-tipping more comprehensively and about finding ways to make appropriate removal by EDC, or personally to Flusco or other relevant sites, both easier and more affordable. Ways to communicate with visitors by all modes of travel need to be devised, so that the carelessness visitors show towards the very environment they have come to see becomes a thing of the past.

EDC has a form that can be completed to report dog fouling, but the name and address of the dog owner is required, which is often entirely unknown, and people are unwilling to ‘snitch’ on their neighbours. There is also a form to alert the council about a well-used route or area that is problematic, which they will clean. It is clear that this doesn’t solve the problem. More needs to be understood about why people do not clean up after their dogs,

and why they leave bags full of faeces rather than taking them to be properly disposed of in a waste bin or in their own blue rubbish bag at home.

The current development by CCC of plans for Front Street will undoubtedly change the situation regarding parking in the centre of Alston but we do not currently have any information about what form these changes will take and whether more car parking will be available. It may be that, whatever the outcome of those plans, there needs to be some formal or informal control of parking. Clearly no regular scrutiny by a parking warden is possible, but there may need to be ways to encourage residents whose cars are rarely moved to park elsewhere in order to free up space in the town centre.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
c1	Plan and deliver information leaflets, meetings and activities to inform people about the problems of litter and the costs of managing it – some of which is paid for out of their council tax	EDC, Alston Moor Parish Council and possible involvement of school children
c2	Campaign against fly-tipping, not least by encouraging much more prompt and effective action by EDC and CCC and a willingness by the two authorities to work out between them whose responsibility and incident is (rather than requiring the complainant to start again).	EDC and CCC, encouraged by the parish council and others
c3	Education and information concerning the unpleasantness and dangers of dog faeces need to be communicated in ways that are encouraging rather than punitive	Parish council, schools, with support from local (EDC) dog warden
c4	Survey of actual parking situation in Alston town centre, leading to targeted requests to those whose cars are parked longterm to use other spaces	Volunteers organised through AMBA or parish council to note registration numbers of cars three times a day over a week. Identification of other places where vehicles that do not move might be parked, and efforts to identify the owners and communicate with them

## (d) Fair and inclusive of individuals and groups

### A Area of focus

Too often, in all communities, buildings and other spaces, communication, et al, are arranged for a presumed 'norm'. We tend to 'forget' about the minority groups whose needs thus do not get catered for – those with mobility difficulties, wheelchair users, pregnant women, those pushing a baby buggy, people with impaired hearing or profoundly

deaf, those with visual impairments and blind, people with learning disabilities, those on the autism spectrum, people with dementia in one of its many forms – and doubtless others omitted from this list.

Additionally, there are contexts in which the voices and experience of those under eighteen are forgotten about, and although it is rare these days, sometimes men are assumed to be the norm and women's needs are overlooked.

To ensure our community is fair and inclusive of all, we need to be aware of and consider all these needs, and get better at including as many as we can, working towards ways to be welcoming and supportive to everybody. We are an ageing population (this is true across Cumbria and indeed much of the UK) and more and more people will need the thought and attention of those who are younger and more able to provide support.

### **B What is needed**

Those who provide any facilities which the public accesses – shops, village halls, churches, etc – would ideally provide all that is needed for each of the disadvantaged groups. It is of course often financially prohibitive to make a place entirely accessible to everyone, but it is worth becoming aware of what might ameliorate the difficulties experienced, and install whatever is affordable. A simple handrail up steps might make a place accessible to more than an expensive ramp would cater for; ensuring a chair is always available for those who cannot stand for long is an easy way to help many.

Undertaking an audit of premises to see how well it caters for the needs of others is one way to start the process of improving access. But of course, the physical building is only part of the ways in which we can be inclusive and fair for all. The way we speak, the way we position ourselves, and much more, can be very helpful or very unhelpful. We have to know how to be responsive to those who are dealing with difficulties imposed by the ways 'normal' society does things.

Some members of our community are unable to participate easily no matter what provisions are made. They need as much support as anyone else, and an inclusive community will provide company, practical help and advice to all who are less able or unable to go out, who are isolated because of the death of a partner or others close to them, etc.

### **C. Potential actions**

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
d1	Local businesses to audit their premises to identify what barriers there might be to full accessibility and inclusiveness	AMBA might identify a good audit method or an individual who could help, and encourage all local businesses to complete such an audit. Individual businesses could then, with information provided, identify the likely cost of each potential

		improvement and which they would be able to do in the near future, mid- and long-term.
d2	Training for all who deal with the public about catering for those with sensory impairments	AMBA or Parish Council might identify a good training so that people with hearing or visual impairments can be better served – the rôle of good lighting (for lip reading), reduction of ambient noise, clearing unexpected obstacles, larger typeface, etc
d3	Raising awareness about ways to make life easier for those with dementia	Alston Moor Dementia Alliance, already formed, to provide more events and Dementia Awareness training for all – businesses and individuals
d4	Organise volunteers to provide support, information and social contact for those who are isolated.	Good Neighbour Scheme being planned – will need support from all bodies and individuals when established
d5	Event planning to include awareness of inclusiveness throughout	Sharing of experience and understanding through various means

## (e) Services for everyone

### **A Area of focus**

For as long as most residents can remember, the geographical position and low population of Alston Moor have resulted in concern about the viability of services provided by statutory bodies, actual threats from providers including plans to close schools and medical services, the loss or lessening of police presence, etc.

In recent years, the police station has been closed and the visible police presence lessened although regular and visible visits by PCSOs (police community support officers) have alleviated concerns to some extent.

The secondary school (Samuel King's School) has been slated for closure more than once, with the loss of a sixth form being the compromise on one occasion; and the cutbacks in funding for education have more of an impact on our small schools than on larger ones, where the per capita funding goes further owing to the economy of size. Even large schools in Cumbria are warning of the impact of the considerable reduction in funding, in real terms. The co-location of Alston Primary and SKS has reduced the costs of both schools enough to keep our education provision safe for the moment, but history tells us there is likely to be another threat.

We spent two years arguing against the proposals of the Success Regime to close our hospital beds. Hundreds of us contributed to the consultation, unanimously voting in a local referendum to retain the hospital, writing responses to the proposals, analysing the flaws in the arguments used – only to see all our protests apparently regarded as irrelevant, not only

by the Success Regime but by the Clinical Commissioning Group which accepted the entirety of the proposals (which affected people across the whole of north Cumbria). The only saving grace was that a proposal developed by the Alston Medical Practice and the League of Friends of the Ruth Lancaster James Hospital was seen as a possible way forward and was given a year to work up a 'business plan'. This has since been accepted. The issue now is to make sure it is implemented in its entirety and continues, as intended, to develop appropriately in response to changes in the NHS and in social care etc. As part of the Eden Integrated Care Community, we need to ensure that the intended changes in future management of NHS and social care do not lead to a situation where Alston Moor is, as ever, seen as the 'out on a limb' part of the service which can be cut adrift.

A concern often expressed is that there is no specialist dementia care on Alston Moor, nor end-of-life hospice care. The hospital was perceived to provide the latter to a limited extent. While it is difficult to provide specialist dementia care when the numbers involved are small and the inputs needed so very considerable, it is an issue that needs to be examined and as much care provided locally as is possible.

Social care is problematic across the country, but particularly difficult on Alston Moor where social care is provided by agencies based elsewhere. We are lucky to have a County Council that has retained care homes (without this policy, our new hospital bed arrangements, based at the care home, could not have been managed), but with continuing pressure on Council budgets it is going to take new ways of thinking and working to ensure the continuation of all services.

### **B What is needed**

We need to engage with the various bodies and services so that they are aware of our commitment to their work. People who feel appreciated – even if receiving constructive criticism – are always more likely to recognise the needs of the community! So communication and volunteer support, where appropriate, are the key ways in which we can ensure that our services survive, develop, and meet our needs.

Those individuals in the community who do volunteer, in the various committees and activities that support and progress the services, need to be supported rather than criticised. It is also important that those individuals communicate with residents through whatever means are appropriate and accessible, be that personal conversations (often the best), online groups, the Alston Moor Newsletter, etc.

Volunteering to help in various contexts will enable the services to make the most of possibilities on Alston Moor. While ideally there would be more money in the system and people paid to do all that is needed, the current reality is that this is not going to happen in the foreseeable future, and the only alternative is volunteering or obtaining funds through grants for specific projects.

It is important that all services, including those not available currently on Alston Moor or only in limited form, including end-of-life services, are known about and publicised to the friends and family of those in need of them, and to the wider community so that there is understanding and clarity. It is not enough that people get to know about availability at the point of need – considerable anxiety and concern could be avoided if there were more widespread knowledge of what we can access.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
e1	Support for our schools, through volunteering, engaging with management staff about concerns, ensuring that as many children as possible attend their local school.	The PTA and others might develop plans, encourage support through all means. The rest is down to individuals!
e2	Ensure good communication from those involved, as volunteers and otherwise, in the various projects and activities relating to our services	All those involved, using the various media available and through personal contact
e3	Gather information about services, including end-of-life and supportive services, and communicate these through all appropriate means.	Various groups and routes might be used – the Healthcare Alliance group, parish council and others to gather info, Alston Medical Practice might put info in with prescriptions, articles in Alston Moor Newsletter, regular postings on Facebook and websites et al
e4	Establish social care apprenticeships	Healthcare Alliance group, Carlisle College, CCC
e5	Explore ways to recruit, train and employ care workers on Alston Moor, including as a partnership with Grisedale Croft	CCC, Grisedale Croft, others?

## (f) Quality of life, learning and leisure for all

### A Area of focus

There are many things that contribute to quality of life – the friends we have, the environment we live in, the services available. Sports provision, interest groups, clubs, performances etc are all important to our life here.

One of the key things is the creative and learning environment which we can access or participate in. Whether this is a gig, embroidery, book group, exploring astronomy, learning a new language or whatever, we do not have to miss out just because we live far from centres of population. There is an enormous wealth of talent and knowledge available on Alston Moor, which could be harnessed and shared.

The Highlights shows, gigs organised by a variety of people and organisations, the art group exhibitions, the folk music nights at pubs in Nenthead, Garrigill and Alston, and more, contribute to the enjoyment of many of us. They are not always as well known-about as might be and hence not as well-attended as hoped.

Some established services and events on Alston Moor may not need further work, but do need to be appreciated! Our library at Local Links, the book groups that meet there and elsewhere, the shops selling arts and crafts, all contribute to the sense of Alston as a place with a cultural life where learning and creativity are valued.

### **B What is needed**

Discovering who has skills to offer, enthusiasms to share, knowledge to impart, would enable us to begin to construct an evening class programme. *At the time of writing, it is intended to ask for people to offer their skills and knowledge via the Community Plan survey, yet to happen at the time of this first draft.* Meetings/classes/groups could be established on the model of the University of the Third Age, but available for all ages.

More publicity for events seems to be needed as many people say ‘if only I’d known’. The more people attend and pay – whether the money goes to the room hire and performers or to a charity or other cause – the more interesting and enjoyable events we are likely to have available. A lack of attendance certainly will not make it likely that a similar event is held in the future.

The large number of artists and craftspeople on Alston Moor already do need support and promotion and there might be a worthwhile case to build on their work by bringing more artists, craftspeople, musicians etc to Alston Moor to develop our reputation as a place to be visited – see section 2.

### **C. Potential actions**

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
f1	Establish a voluntary ‘evening class’ programme, with any and all topics available that can be offered by local people, from carpentry to bee-keeping, grime music to astronomy, Spanish language to basic maths, etc etc	A group of people to organise and co-ordinate; Alston Moor Federation to host (preliminary discussions have taken place), and other sites as they become available.
f2	Work on all means to publicise, regularly and repeatedly, the various events (one-off and regular) and encourage attendance and active participation	The new e-mail Alston Moor News, online sources and word-of-mouth are all needed alongside the conventional posters. The parish council and others might consider ways to assist this effort.
f3	Promotion of our artists and craftspeople in visitor and tourism material	AMBA, Cumbria and Eden Tourism, might all contribute to this