

## **ALSTON MOOR COMMUNITY PLAN 2019**

### **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 5-15 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 (particularly after years of austerity and severe cuts to council funding) 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, and conversations in various contexts.

### **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 has been considerably higher in the past, and is currently regarded as being 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 since 2010, 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.**

## **OUR PLAN AND POTENTIAL ACTIONS**

- Within each **main section**, the particular areas of focus are outlined 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.
- Section B indicates long-term aim(s). Section C notes actions identifiable in the short term.
- These action points should not be seen as definitive. The context changes with remarkable rapidity, and new opportunities emerge while others disappear.

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
SECTION 1: Maintaining and growing a community	6
(a) Uniting a community	6
(b) A community for young people	8
(c) Being good neighbours	11
(d) Fair and inclusive of individuals and groups	14
(e) Services for everyone	15
(f) Quality of life, learning and leisure for all	18
SECTION 2: Working and contributing	19
(a) The economy and its challenges	19
(b) Working: employment and self-employment	23
(c) Developing our tourism economy	25
(d) Contributing through volunteering	28
SECTION 3: Environment, farming, food and fuel	31
(a) Our environment, its stewardship and future	31
(b) Food and its production	32
(c) The place of farming in the community	34
(d) Fuel and power for the future	36
SECTION 4: Where we live – appropriate homes, spaces and services	
(a) Our homes	
(b) Maintaining our built environment	
(c) Keeping our links	
SECTION 5: Travel and communications	
(a) Roads, travel and transport	
(b) Public and social transport	
(c) Broadband and mobile phones	

## CONCLUSION

Appendix 1: What is a Sustainable Community?

Appendix 2: The Alston Moor Community Plan process

Appendix 3: Acronyms – what the letters mean

Final Draft

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

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

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

A.1 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.

A.2 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.

A.3 Most often cited as a major factor in the sense of community now are the events, annual and more frequent, that bring people together.

A.4 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 proactive rather than reactive.

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

B.1 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).

B.2 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

B.3 A major town centre event, perhaps taking advantage of the facilities provided by the forthcoming Front Street development, during the main tourist season, would enable the community to ‘showcase’ itself to visitors and be a way to market Alston Moor as well as creating an exciting community project.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
1a1	More linking together of activities – an organisation, loose or formally constituted – which could ensure joint marketing as appropriate, sharing of info and dates. Also ensuring dates don’t clash – organisers to check	Current organisers, with possible help and co-ordination from AMP.
1a2	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.
1a3	Further work on the newly-launched Alston Moor News e-mail, with research concerning its reach and impact, and	Enlarging the small group to help the existing volunteers and undertake research and analysis

	possible supportive methods to reach those not currently aware of it	
1a4	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
1a5	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
1a6	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
1a7	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
1a8	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
1a9	Develop a new event, focussed specifically on the centre of Alston, during the prime tourist season, to create a well-publicised focal point involving many people.	AMPC, AMP, local tourist businesses, interested individuals, youth group, possible the pantomime group? Needs creative thought about focus, perhaps the history AND present-day of Alston Moor?

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

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

A.1 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.

A.2 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 (accurate at October 2018) 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**

B.1 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.

B.2 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.

B.3 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 this 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).

B.4 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.

B.5 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. Young people entering the building trade on Alston Moor could be at the forefront of energy efficient and sustainable building in the future. 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>
1b1	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.
1b2	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!!
1b3	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.
1b4	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
1b5	Establish a youth council	Joint working through the youth club, SKS and others
1b6	Establish a work experience programme for young people at SKS	Joint working between SKS, AMBA and businesses across Alston Moor
1b7	Establish apprenticeships in social care	To be discussed and implemented via the Alston Health Alliance
1b8	Investigate and encourage other possible apprenticeships	Liaison between local businesses, Carlisle College, and other parties, particularly building companies offering training in energy efficiency and sustainability.
1b9	Ensure information about apprenticeships and vocational pathways is available through the school	AMBA, SKS, others
1b10	Find ways to encourage young people in public speaking, debating and developing young people's confidence and capacity to make changes	SKS, youth club, parish council

**(c) Being good neighbours****A Area of focus**

A.1 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, and one that has received a few comments.

A.2 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.<sup>1</sup>

A.3 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 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, and finding ways to enable local Alston Moor residents to come into town to shop, visit a café, etc, is critical to the survival of town centre businesses.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

A.4 Speeding by cars in various parts of Alston Moor is an also issue mentioned. Occasional speed traps have not noticeably improved the problem. Speeding up the often-busy Front Street in Alston is worrying for pedestrians and other drivers; Nenthead has experienced similar problems along the main road; some Garrigill residents feel there should be a speed limit within the village.

## **B. What is needed**

B.1 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.

B.2 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.

B.3 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. Hopefully the Front Street development will also help address some of the speeding issues for Alston.

## **C. Potential actions**

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
Ic1	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
Ic2	Campaign against fly-tipping, not least by	EDC and CCC, encouraged by the parish

	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).	council and others
Ic3	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
Ic4	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**

A.1 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.

A.2 Additionally, there are contexts in which the voices and experience of those under eighteen are forgotten about, and although it is rarer these days, sometimes men are assumed to be the norm and women's needs are overlooked.

A.3 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**

B.1 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.

B.2 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.

B.3 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>
Id1	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, using information from organisations that specialise in such work. 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.
Id2	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
Id3	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
Id4	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
Id5	Event planning to include awareness of inclusiveness throughout	Sharing of experience and understanding through various means
Id6	More seating provided in public areas, particularly Front Street and Tyne Willows	Alston Moor Parish Council

Id7	Ensure road works, including the Front Street plans, include dropped kerbs for pushchairs and wheelchairs	Individuals and groups on Alston Moor to put in requests to CCC when appropriate
-----	---	--

## **(e) Services for everyone**

### **A Area of focus**

A.1 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.

A.2 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.

A.3 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 (including Nenthead Primary School) safe for the moment, but history tells us there is likely to be another threat.

A.4 We spent two years, working as a united community, arguing against the proposals of the Success Regime to close our hospital beds.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the beds have been closed, but 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.5 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

---

<sup>2</sup> 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).

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.

A.6 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**

B.1 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. It is not enough to mount one of our very effective campaigns when there is a threat to a service; we need to keep aware of what is happening and keep up the pressure.

B.2 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.

B.3 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.

B.4 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>
1e1	Support for our schools, through volunteering, engaging with management staff about concerns, ensuring that as	The PTA and others might develop plans, encourage support through all means. The rest is down to individuals!

	many children as possible attend their local school.	
le2	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
le3	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
le4	Establish social care apprenticeships	Healthcare Alliance group, Carlisle College, CCC
le5	Explore ways to recruit, train and employ care workers on Alston Moor, including as a partnership with Grisedale Croft	CCC, Grisedale Croft, others?
le6	Establish a group to monitor upcoming policy changes, find best practice ideas from around the world, make contact with others interested in the same issues	AM parish council, AMP, County Councillor, District Councillors, etc

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

### **A Area of focus**

A.1 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.

A.2 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.

A.3 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**

B.1 Discovering who has skills to offer, enthusiasms to share, knowledge to impart, would enable us to begin to construct an evening class programme. Meetings/classes/groups could be established on the model of the University of the Third Age, but available for all ages.

B.2 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.

B.3 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>
If1	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.
If2	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.
If3	Encourage positive promotion of events from all venues and authorities	EDC guidelines for TIC staff; information sharing and support between all venues (needs individuals involved to set up a regular meeting or similar)
If4	Promotion of our artists and craftspeople in visitor and tourism material	AMBA, Cumbria and Eden Tourism, might all contribute to this

## **ALSTON MOOR COMMUNITY PLAN 2019**

### **SECTION 2: WORKING AND CONTRIBUTING**

#### **(a) The economy and its challenges**

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

A.1 For a community to thrive and survive, it must have a sustainable economic base – a way for local people to earn money within or reasonably close to the area, and for retail and service businesses to be supported by local and visitor custom. Alston Moor's economy was built on mining and associated businesses, but these major employers closed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the largest employers now employ a small fraction of the numbers that formed the workforces then.

A.2 Nonetheless, Alston Moor HAS survived as a community, with a rather different economic base from that of earlier times. Small businesses provide services (hairdressers, garages, etc), retail (food, crafts, etc), hospitality (pubs, bed and breakfast, self-catering lets, hotels); a number are employed in our public services (medical and social care, education); there are one or two larger businesses; some individuals now take advantage of technology to work remotely in businesses based elsewhere or running their own online business from home; some people work away from Alston Moor, travelling daily. Resourceful and innovative people earn a living and spend money on Alston Moor.

A.3 However, there are signs that all is not well. To some extent this is a nation-wide pattern, with high streets everywhere experiencing the impact of online shopping and advertising. Our situation reflects that national issue, but as a small community it has perhaps a more worrying outcome. The Town Benchmarking Report 2017 reported that 41% of businesses in Alston said that their turnover had decreased over the previous year and 35% expected turnover to decrease over the coming year. Any short-term added problems highlight the need to ensure as solid an economic base as possible so that problems can be weathered.<sup>3</sup>

A.4 Keeping a range of diverse and interesting shops and artists'/craftworkers' open studios is understood as essential to maintaining the attractiveness of Alston Moor as a visitor destination as well as for the community. Our reputation for workers' co-operatives and social enterprises has been useful and could be built on. It is also important to keep the area looking attractive – the Townscape Heritage Project has improved the 'look' of Front

---

<sup>3</sup> During 2018, Alston Moor, and Alston itself especially, experienced particular difficulties with long and difficult road closures owing to planned roadworks and utilities upgrading. Our geographical position, lack of easy alternative routes, and narrow local roads all led to great difficulty for those businesses reliant on people being able to access them.

Street but more is needed, and there are ongoing concerns (in 2019) about the reinstatement of the street's famous cobbles and the plans for the redesign of the street.

A.5 The difficulty of running small businesses in a small community, of ensuring their viability, has led some business-owners to suggest that there should be ongoing help with business rates and council tax. Alston Moor does currently benefit from Eden District Council's decision not to charge business rates for micro-businesses.

A.6 A problem that many are all too aware of is the fact that all banks have now closed and there is only one ATM (cash machine) available, and not in the town centre but at Townfoot. Not all businesses are able to take cards. This undoubtedly deters some potential 'en route' tourists who may not be staying locally but would stop and purchase a coffee or a postcard, and perhaps more if they could get cash. The post office is available to provide cash for the customers of some banks during opening hours, but this is not an adequate solution. Also, businesses need to be able to pay in cheques and currently many must travel to the nearest branch of their bank or rely on the post, which is a disincentive for business start-ups.

## **B. What is needed**

B.1 Bringing together all of this and issues raised in further sub-sections, regeneration of Alston Moor and particularly Alston town centre is needed, and a holistic strategy for this to include marketing and promotion (possibly with a funded individual to undertake this rôle) is probably the most important and 'core' action to be taken immediately, and developing in the longer term.

B.2 One thing everyone on Alston Moor can do is to support local businesses. Of course we all use shops and services elsewhere at times and for a wide range of different products, but spending our money locally as far as possible is an easy and straightforward way of supporting the local economy.

B.3 However, it has long been recognised that many of our shops and pubs would not survive without the boost given to them by visitors. *Section 2(c) Developing our tourism economy* below focusses on the tourism economy, and support from local people for the work of those in that sector or needing support from visitors would be a useful way to encourage this means of ensuring our healthy economy. The need to encourage new businesses and employment is covered in *Section 2(b) Working: employment and self-employment* below.

B.4 Alston Moor Business Association represents many (but by no means all) of the businesses on Alston Moor and can push for their interests (including in relation to business rates and council tax) with councils and government. Ensuring that the issues of rurality are clearly understood is obviously important.

B.5 The lack of an ATM/cash machine in the centre of Alston is well-understood as a problem. Both the Co-op and the Post Office have expressed an interest in providing such a machine (internally in the case of the Co-op, with its relatively long opening hours, externally in the case of the Post Office). Decisions on such installations are not down to local management, but to national and regional offices, and, in the case of the Post Office, provision is by the Bank of Ireland who do not currently have plans to roll out further ATMs.

B.6 Given that mainstream banks have closed their Alston Moor branches, it is unlikely that we could persuade any to re-open. A number of people locally bank with the Cumberland Building Society, which is a mutual and has a fine record of supporting communities in Cumbria. It has been suggested that, although it has not as yet responded positively to the suggestion that they open a branch on Alston Moor, members presenting motions at the AGM might result in such a branch in the long term. A mobile bank has also been suggested, as operates in some rural areas. The Alston Moor office of the Credit Union has unfortunately closed, apparently no longer being economically viable within the overall Credit Union framework.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
2a1	Establish a group to work towards the development of a Regeneration Strategy, devising a plan, investigating grant possibilities, establishing methods of marketing and promotion, possibly through a dedicated co-ordinator.	AMP, AMPC, AMBA, local business people, interested individuals, giving the widest representation of interests. Develop earlier regeneration strategy to current circumstances. Ensure wide communication and involvement. Work to engage CCC and EDC, plus local MP, and thence to gain major funding for an ambitious project and paid co-ordinator(s).
2a2	Devise new ways to encourage local people to use local businesses, possibly by a reward or discount system	AMBA, Alston Moor Parish Council, groups of town centre shops and pubs
2a3	Promote business interests with all relevant bodies, emphasising the particular needs of rural businesses	AMBA
2a4	Those already banking with the Cumberland Building Society to propose motions to the AGM to open a (full- or part-time) branch on Alston Moor. Others opening accounts with the CBS to increase the numbers. Work with local businesses to establish potential support for CBS if they opened a branch in Alston.	Current Cumberland Building Society members. Anyone individual or business considering opening a bank account! AMBA, AMPC
2a5	Explore the possibility of a mobile bank	Identify where the nearest mobile bank

	visiting Alston Moor	provision is and which bank it is provided by. Small group?
2a6	Keep in touch with the Co-op management, and the Post Office organisation, about installing cash machines internally (Co-op) or externally (PO)	This is a matter of keeping them aware of our wishes. AMPC writing regular (quarterly?) letters?

## (b) Working: employment and self-employment

### A Area of focus

A.1 Everyone needs an income, and, for the majority of adults below pension age, that means employment or self-employment. Hence it is crucial that Alston Moor can provide adequate opportunities for employment and self-employment. Our geographic position means that, for a high proportion of the local population, that employment needs to be on Alston Moor, although there are, and will continue to be, many who work some distance away.

A.2 Businesses that employ some people would be a great boost for Alston Moor, as would small self-employed businesses which help create a lively and interesting economy that attracts others to live and work here, or visit to take advantage of interesting shops and activities.

A.3 We also know that when there are many empty shops, there is a sense among residents, potential residents, visitors and potential visitors that the area is not worth attention, that it is 'run down', leading to a downward spiral. The work through the Townscape Heritage Project to improve our shop fronts has certainly helped to make Alston more attractive but there are empty shops and a need to find ways to make the area more productive, employed and busy.

A.4 While the recent growth in the game-shooting industry has provided employment, there is also concern that it causes a downturn in access and biodiversity, both of which are important to the local economy and visitors.

### B. What is needed

B.1 Many people believe that, given the possibilities opened up by digital technology, it should be possible to attract people here to set up businesses, from single-person enterprises to those employing a number of people. The problem is that the potential entrepreneurs and innovators do not know we exist and do not realise the quality of life they could have on Alston Moor while earning money from a successful enterprise. Finding ways to get ourselves better known, enabling people around the country to know about our community, is important in our future planning.

B.2 While many conventional retail outlets may not be able to survive at a time when people buy so much online, there is no doubt there are possibilities for the empty shops on Front Street. The Town Benchmarking Report 2017 says that 81% of Alston's shops are unique (17% higher than the small towns average) and we could build on that. The reputation Alston Moor already has for its craftworkers, artists and musicians may indicate that further specialist shops and businesses might strengthen the local 'brand'. Other suggestions include a brewery and a wine bar with food, and innovative uses of shop fronts might be found including gaming. What is agreed by everyone is that a large national chain outlet would not be good for Alston Moor, as it would inevitably lead to the closure of small businesses and swamp the character of the place.

B.3 It is important that new jobs are properly set up, and not merely minimum wage in the long term (although it is understood that new start-ups may not initially be able to pay anything more, and of course if businesses are not well-supported by local trade, higher wages will not be possible). It is well-known that living in a rural area is expensive, given the cost of travel, the sometimes higher cost of basic necessities than might be available in a city etc, and it is essential that a low wage economy is not something to be expected and accepted.

B.4 The possibility of an outdoor farmers' market or similar has support from a number of people across Alston Moor but would need some thought and organisation. Assuming the work on Front Street includes, as is currently intended, an area that could be used as a market, this could be established as a regular event. Of course, as with other retail businesses, unless such markets are well-supported by local people, they will not survive.

B.5 The need for apprenticeships for young people has been mentioned in *Section 1(b) A community for young people* but deserves reiteration here, as it is an important aspect of the future economy we hope for.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
2b1	Devise a programme of press releases, approach journalists in all media, to 'advertise' Alston Moor as a good place to set up business including diverse relevant information. Include films which can be viewed in various places on the internet – existing film has already attracted new residents.	AMPC, AMBA, perhaps a group set up specifically to do this? Important to have a broad range of people involved. Interest people across the country, make clear all the services and support available. Devise a package of support for anyone interested, regarding accommodation, etc etc. Needs to be well-planned with a programme of things over a year or so. Link this to the Regeneration Strategy identified at <i>Action 2a1</i> .

2b2	Discuss with existing craftspeople and artists about ways their work can be promoted, and encourage others to move here and establish outlets. Possibility of an annual arts festival with open venues across Alston Moor.	Art Group, AMP, AMBA, Nenthead Chapel Arts & Visitor Centre, others? Possible use of empty shops in Alston to display art, displays and events in pubs and cafés, live music included.
2b3	Establish what businesses might be wanted by current residents – various ideas mentioned include a greengrocers, clothes shop, garden centre with café, farm shop.	A ‘fantasy-shopping’ event? Volunteer group to organise. Involve young people in such discussion and brainstorming.
2b4	Establish a regular (monthly or fortnightly during the summer?) farmers’ market or similar	AMBA, AMPC, volunteer group; and good support from local residents. Market day needs research – which Saturdays are used by other local towns? How good might a Friday be?

### (c) Developing our tourism economy

#### A Area of focus

A.1 Tourism has, at least since Victorian times, been an important element in the economy of Alston. Where once visitors came for the thrill of a boat trip along the Nent Force Level, now our visitors come to walk, to cycle on the C2C and other routes, to experience the landscape and communities of the North Pennines, to explore our mining history, to travel on the South Tynedale Railway and to visit some of our renowned artists and craft workers.

A.2 Many businesses on Alston Moor focus specifically on visitors – hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast places, self-catering provision, and visitor attractions, for example. Many others rely on the income from visitors as part of their annual turnover – such as shops, craft workers, artists’ studios, pubs and cafés.

A.3 In order to maintain a good income from tourism, we need to ensure that we adapt to changing interests and needs. At the same time, it is essential that tourism does not overwhelm aspects of the Alston Moor community. Some feel that the number of holiday lets and holiday/second homes has contributed to making local housing unaffordable for local people and further increase in this aspect of the market is seen as a threat.

A.4 Despite the income, some residents see tourism as a downside of living here and question the viability of the larger heritage projects. In reality, the economy is unlikely to find a different way forward and having established a number of businesses dependent on visitors, it is essential that we ensure their future. Part of this will be good marketing.

#### B. What is needed

B.1 To ensure a range of future visitors, the area must provide, and promote, a range of opportunities which will attract visitors, and ensure that they tell others it is a good place to visit (word of mouth being one of the best methods of advertising). The provision – both accommodation and activities/sites – must be appropriate for the local community as well as working well for visitors.

B.2 Some of the recreational activities that people come for require more than just the existence of a landscape in which they take place. Footpaths, which were once well-maintained through East Cumbria Countryside Project and the County Council, no longer have adequate funding as a result of national cuts, and so are reliant on landowners and supportive local volunteer groups. Existing walk leaflets do go out of date, and new ones and perhaps digitally based walk guides might be devised and produced. The C2C is signed across Alston Moor, but for cyclists to stay, there need to be more local cycle routes and hard copy or digital means to guide those using them.

B.3 There are existing attractions – The Hub, South Tynedale Railway, Nenthead mines (through the Nenthead Mines Conservation Society open days) – and a number of others in the process of development or potential development (Nenthead Chapel, High Mill), However, there are also suggestions of new attractions that might be particularly useful, such as a zipwire and a mountain bike trail at Mount Hooley. The town centre event included as *Action 1a9* might be an important aspect of our tourism promotion and development.

B.4 We can also perhaps make more of what we already have. Many felt that our position as the highest market town in England has been inadequately promoted and could be made more of, possibly with development of a market (see *Action 2b4*). The existing agriculturally-based events – the sheepdog trials and the agricultural/sheep show – might be developed to draw in more people who are not involved in farming, providing education for local and visitor alike. It can be hard for those who know little or nothing of the farming way of life to engage with the sights and activities, but some help and guidance would add to interest and also help develop respect for the agriculture which shapes the landscape and much of the life of Alston Moor.

B.5 A visitor centre has also been suggested, with both High Mill and the old foundry site being mentioned as potential sites. This would require considerable thought about what such a centre would contain, how this would impact on existing provision, how it would be staffed, etc, and to raise the funding for it.

B.6 Clearly, a coherent approach to marketing, locally, regionally and nationally, and also internationally, as began with the Vieille Montagne Conference in 2016, is needed. Although Alston Moor is promoted alongside other destinations in Eden District Council's promotions), we tend to miss out on potential visitors as we are not in the Eden Valley and are geographically more closely connected to other communities in the North Pennines

AONB. Unfortunately, marketing is not part of the AONB Partnership's remit and the counties and districts concerned market their own part of the North Pennines separately. However, it is felt that a strengthening of the 'Roof of England' brand would help us. This is probably most useful as a strapline and brand for walks, sporting events, festivals etc, with the North Pennines as a whole being marketed as the North Pennines (giving a geographical branding). This requires co-ordination within Alston Moor among the various providers, and across the North Pennines.

B.7 Visitors from the USA and Canada are always very excited by things we take for granted – our history and the evidence of it in houses, the landscape, etc. There is a real opportunity to market ourselves to this audience, and these would be visitors able and willing to spend money on a good experience and appropriate art and craft work. We can also build on those European contacts related to mining history. North American and European contacts are particularly likely to be interested in genealogy, and the resources of the Historical Society archive.

B.8 The 'look' of the place is perceived as a key element in ensuring our attractiveness to visitors and encouraging repeat visits. Aspects mentioned include repair of buildings, including shop fronts – the work of the Townscape Heritage Project was seen as a positive but more is needed. There is general appreciation that the area has not been made 'twee', Some people felt that there should be more shrub and bulb planting, and hanging baskets, all around Alston Moor. Some bulb planting has been done previously, and there are hanging baskets most summers, but they do require very frequent watering which means someone/some people being willing to commit to doing this. Bulb planting requires a group (preferably) to raise money for, and buy, bulbs, identify a piece of land on which they can get permission from the owner to plant, and then do the necessary work. Follow-up work is also needed – weeding, grass-cutting, etc.

B.9 The proposed Neighbourhood Plan, in its initial stages through the Parish Council at the time of writing, might be able to provide parameters for the future of second homes and holiday lets. This needs not only the work of parish and district councils, but for local people to participate in the consultations and contribute thoughts.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
2c1	Establish a footpath maintenance group, to liaise with CCC and local landowners, to ensure our footpath network is in good order; to alert CCC to major work needing doing	Possible links between Walkers are Welcome, new Alston Moor Footpaths and Access to Outdoors group, others? Would need to ensure training (may need fund-raising) and close working with CCC and landowners
2c2	Devise digital and hard copy walk and	Possible project for funding? AMPC,

	cycle guides	AMP, Walkers are Welcome, others?
2c3	Investigate the possibility for a zipwire and mountain biking; liaise with landowner(s), raise money, implement	Relevant landowners, originator of the idea, AMBA, AMP, others enthused by the idea
2c4	Work with sheepdog trials and agricultural show organisers to develop information and activities to encourage wider attendance and enable non-farmers to understand and enjoy more of the events, perhaps including more stalls and activities.	Sheepdog trials and agricultural show committees, interested individuals; possibly find small grant to pay for display material and leaflets, perhaps from AM parish council or EDC.
2c5	Consider possible visitor centre if the High Mill project goes ahead	AMBA – needs consideration of what such a centre would include, so liaison with EDC, AMPC, AMP and others might be helpful. Needs to be included in Regeneration Strategy identified at <i>Action 2a1</i>
2c6	Marketing plan, using ‘North Pennines’ and ‘Roof of England’ branding	Accommodation providers, attractions, AMPC, AMP, AMBA; liaison with North Pennines AONB, EDC, Durham and Northumberland providers. Link this to the Regeneration Strategy identified at <i>Action 2a1</i> .
2c7	Bulb planting, hanging baskets etc	People running shops in Alston, individuals – the need for committed hanging basket waterers!! Small grants available from the Parish Council
2c8	Neighbourhood Plan development to manage the potential problems of second homes and holiday lets	AMPC Neighbourhood Plan group, all community in consultations (if the Neighbourhood Plan goes ahead, it will have to be approved by a referendum of all residents, so there will be many opportunities to contribute)
2c9	Marketing of Alston Moor to an international audience, particularly USA and Canada as well as European countries especially those connected via mining history, and to the Netherlands where knowledge of the English language is excellent.	Small group – those who may benefit, Historical Society, those with contacts in the USA? Investigate government-funded projects like the recent ‘Discover England’ fund.
2c10	Programme of night walks to take advantage of dark skies, hopefully extending the tourist season to the darker months	Liaison between NP Astronomical Society, AONB and Walkers are Welcome.
2c11	Promote the Historical Society Archive as a source for genealogical research	Historical Society website, links to that from promotional material particularly that mentioned under <i>Action 2c9</i>

## **(d) Contributing through volunteering**

### **A Area of focus**

A.1 Many people on Alston Moor contribute to the community in a very wide range of ways through offering their time and energy to activities and projects, with no pay but often many other forms of reward. These volunteers are a key part of what makes Alston Moor such a lively, varied and interesting place to live. Volunteers run many of the sports clubs and activities, church groups, WI, League of Friends, Brownies, Nenthead Mines Conservation Society, parish council, Alston Moor Partnership, and so very much more.

A.2 It can be hard being a volunteer. As long as there are several people, the pressures are not quite so tough, but for some who find themselves as one on their own or in a team that is not really big enough, it is hard to take time out when one needs to, or to take on yet another task that suddenly presents itself. To try, on top of that, to find new volunteers is often just beyond possibility. Many (not all) volunteers are retired and cannot keep going forever! There is a need for recruitment, and for involvement of more younger people. The need for ways to identify and recruit volunteers for both long-term and one-off tasks was mentioned frequently during the course of the Community Plan consultation.

A.3 As well as those activities which are of value in the here and now, for people who live on Alston Moor today, we have voluntary activity which is of benefit for the future and for a far wider 'audience' than local residents. The work of the various conservation groups (Nenthead Mines, Nenthead Chapel, et al), and perhaps most particularly our Alston Moor Historical Society Archive, provide a resource for people in the future and internationally. The Archive is our memory bank, and of great use to genealogical researchers looking for family who lived here, and for mine and social history researchers, as well as being of considerable interest to all those who live locally and who visit. The Vieille Montagne Conference of 2016 created links with mining companies and communities in Belgium and Italy, and this has established our Archive as a major voluntary enterprise of international importance.

A.4 Another aspect of voluntary work is the administration of many of Alston Moor websites, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages and groups. One of the complaints is that there are too many and it is hard to find the relevant sites/pages/groups for what one wants. This is a difficult problem, as many Facebook pages/groups are set up as single issue sites and there is no way of forcing individuals, even if one wanted to, to co-operate on creating a single site/page. However, there is probably scope for a central website with links to all the various websites, Facebook groups and pages, etc, available online.

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

B.1 It is clear that ways need to be found to ensure that all the voluntary activity on Alston Moor can continue, for the benefit of local people and of visitors, now and in the future.

This would entail some means of encouraging people to volunteer, supporting them, ensuring that they can be ‘matched’ to appropriate one-off or long-term projects/activities, perhaps researching appropriate training for certain tasks, etc. It is unlikely that a volunteer could be found to undertake such a rôle, and for a paid post (perhaps one day a week) funding would be required to pay a self-employed contractor and cover travel and home office expenses.

B.2 It is harder to see how the problems of social media can be addressed. On the internet, anyone has the opportunity to start websites, blogs, Twitter accounts, Facebook pages and groups etc as they choose, and this is of course a tremendous boost for many groups, causes and ideas. However, it does make things difficult for those just trying to keep up with what is happening on Alston Moor. The only solution of any sort seems to be an ‘Alston internet central’ listing all the various Alston Moor-related sources of information available on the internet, with links. This might encourage ways to keep non-computer-using people informed also, if there were clearer ways to identify the information of most interest to any individual. Obviously such a website would need to be kept up-to-date on a very regular – at least twice a week – basis, and this is not straightforward, requiring as it does a considerable investment of time and effort. Once again, a paid contract might be the only way to go.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
2d1	Identify ways to recruit and support volunteers, for long-term and one-off rôles	AMPC, AMP, others.
2d2	Devise a central Alston Moor internet resource with links to the plethora of Alston Moor-related online resources	AMPC, AMP, Cybermoor, others

## **SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENT, FARMING, FOOD AND FUEL**

### **(a) Our environment, its stewardship and future**

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

A.1 We all know we live in a special area of the country, and that its character has been recognised in its designation as part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a wonderful area, whether we go walking in it or just enjoy the views. We are also aware that we are not isolated from changes happening world-wide – climate change and environmental damage. As a community, we want to be part of the solution, to keep our area looking and ‘feeling’ good, and to contribute towards the reduction in carbon emissions, major reduction in single-use plastic pollution, keeping air and water pollution low etc.

A.2 The landscape has been crafted through centuries of farming and mining, and one can read much of the history in the land if one knows what to look for. It is well-understood that intensive use of the land damages biodiversity and we are increasingly aware of the need to protect and encourage biodiversity, especially in a world of climate change. Approaches to land use that maximise biodiversity are clearly important, recognising that farming can be a force for high nature value landscapes.

A.3 There is also the issue of light pollution – living in an area that has some of the darkest skies in England, we not only enjoy the sight of stars, planets, meteors and the moon ourselves, but host many amateur and professional astronomers, who visit from near and far. Increasingly, as people light up dark areas throughout the night and install bright security lights, the clarity of the Alston Moor night sky is being impaired.

A.4 Finding ways to generate non-polluting renewable energy locally would be one way of working towards a less environmentally-damaging future. See part (d) of this section.

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

B.1 An understanding of all that is involved in caring for our environment is an important aspect of how we, as a community, can ensure that we contribute to the protection of our landscape (and skyline). Everyone on Alston Moor – farmers, woodland owners, gamekeepers, gardeners, all of us dealing with our rubbish/recycling, making decisions about how we heat our homes and water, how we travel etc – is jointly responsible for our future.

B.2 There is a general recognition that care for our landscape is a key issue for everyone here, whether farmers, people involved with tourism, or simply a local resident who enjoys living in a good environment. Each of us can make some impact on the future landscape by our actions and by supporting moves by others.

### C. Potential actions

	What could be done in 2019/20?	Who might do this, and how?
3a1	Create a more-informed local population. Understanding the issues means it becomes easier to put pressure on government, councils, statutory and voluntary bodies etc	Encouragement, perhaps through AMP, AMBA, AMPC, of interest groups to produce information material. Ideally, creative and innovative ways to get the messages across.
3a2	Use relevant opportunities to impart information and knowledge about farming, woodland management etc	Organisers of farming events and others. See <i>Action 2c4</i> .
3a2	Campaign to encourage the use of dark skies compliant outside lighting and the changing of existing lighting which produces upward light pollution.	North Pennines Astronomy Society, North Pennines AONB. Neighbourhood Plan group regarding future planning conditions, EDC. Dark skies night walks for local people and visitors in winter. See <i>Action 2c10</i> .
3a3	Investigate the possibility of getting the old water pumps functioning in order for people to refill water bottles (reducing single use plastic bottle use). These have, we think, already been linked to the mains supply, but further piping would be needed to bring the water safely to the taps.	CCC Front Street Development Plan. AMPC.

## (b) Food and its production

### A Area of focus

A.1 Currently, the only food commercially produced on Alston Moor is meat, largely lamb with some beef. However, many people grow vegetables and fruit in their gardens, some using greenhouses, conservatories and polytunnels as ways to extend the growing season and enable the growth of plants needing warmth. Others keep hens for egg production and a few people do sell eggs locally, but not as a major income source.

A.2 There is an interest in producing more for our local consumption. Regret was expressed by some people that there is no longer any milk – cow's or goat's – produced for sale on Alston Moor (both having been available in the last 35 years), and others felt it was really important that we become more self-sufficient in vegetable and fruit production. This would enable a reduction in transport costs and provide a number of possibilities of benefit to the community. Several recalled that cheese had been made in Alston in the 1980s and wished that there were local cheese again available.

A.3 Although the legal requirements for abattoirs make it very difficult to establish one on Alston Moor, there is a considerable interest in being able to promote our local lamb and beef production through availability at the local butcher's shop and in meals produced in local hotels, cafés and pubs. This happens to some extent with locally-shot game birds and locally-caught wild trout and salmon.

## **B. What is needed**

B.1 Establishing a community vegetable garden could build on the work done by the Grisedale Community Garden volunteers, who have been tireless in re-establishing the garden there. There is interest in the possibility of growing food together, both for the value of vegetables and fruit as food and for the social value of working together on a worthwhile project. The 'Incredible Edible' project in Todmorden and its many related projects (including in Penrith and Hexham) use many small areas of ground throughout towns to grow vegetables, fruit and herbs which are tended by volunteers and available for picking by any member of the community. Such a project might be able to utilise some of the patches of green space around Alston and Garrigill (Nenthead may be more difficult owing to the mining contamination).

B.2 It might also be possible, if more major pieces of land were available, to establish productive and semi-commercial fruit and vegetable growing areas, possibly supplemented by polytunnels and greenhouses. An ideal would be a plot of land near a community building, so produce could be used by both the volunteers and a community kitchen/café, or supplying existing local cafés keen to emphasise local produce. Should a particular crop be possible to grow commercially, this might be the foundation of a viable enterprise, possibly using renewable heat sources. This would entail job creation and training possibilities.

B.3 While the interest in local milk production has come from potential consumers rather than those who might establish a dairy, there is a national interest in micro-dairies that has grown over the last few years, with courses available. As well as producing milk for sale, the producers might be interested in establishing a cheese-making business.

B.4 Establishing the 'brand' of local meat might be a useful way of promoting its sale locally including at the developing farm shop at Epicum and the local wholefood shop, and its use in local cafés and restaurants. Leaflets could e.g. explain the breeds and processes of hill-farming and the particular characteristics of the resulting meat, including the need for slaughter elsewhere.

B.5 Adding value to local produce is essential, and creating unusual products like smoked meats, cheeses and vegetables would be a useful addition to what Alston Moor can offer to those seeking a local food purchase. If a dairy is established, paneer is a relatively simple cheese to make and does not require maturing – it also takes well to smoking.

B.6 Although there are few successful beehives on Alston Moor, it may be possible for more hives to be established. Conservation of our wild bee populations is important to ensure good pollination for crops.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
3b1	Investigate the possibilities for fruit, vegetable and herb production for community groups and as a commercial enterprise. Consider hydroponic growing to increase the range of possible crops.	The Greenprint project has established a feasibility project to look at the possibilities, to report in the first half of 2019. Those taking up the suggestions might also look at possible hydroponics.
3b2	Support for proposals arising from the Greenprint study	Local landowners, volunteer gardeners, AMP for potential grant-funded work
3b3	Investigate the possibilities for micro-dairying and cheese-making on Alston Moor, including possible goat dairying	Local landowners or potential landowners interested in establishing a unique business. Possibly a group looking to attract people to move and establish a business on Alston Moor could research and disseminate such information.
3b4	Establishment of a 'brand', promote local meat to food outlets, produce leaflet or other material to be available in such outlets. Alston Moor brand, in form of a logo, to be used on all local produce.	Local farmers, possibly with help and support from AMBA, AMP. Local businesses especially food-related ones. Promote through Taste Cumbria as well as elsewhere
3b5	Get professional advice on viability of beehives on Alston Moor – if feasible, establish training for those interested.	Greenprint feasibility study
3b6	Establish a smokehouse to smoke cheese, meat, appropriate vegetables etc	Food producers, including farmers, any cheesemakers, growers.

## (c) The place of farming in the community

### A. Area of focus

A.1 We are surrounded by land that has been, and continues to be, farmed, although of course parts of it have also been the site of mining in the past. We can see the evidence of mining in the landscape – tailings, washing floors, levels, dams hushes – but of course the stone walls are a significant part of the farming landscape, as are many of the small woodlands (even though some of them may be relics of mining plantings) and the many dwellings – some ruined, some occupied – scattered across Alston Moor.

A.2 Exactly how that landscape looks is now largely down to farming practices, and those are influenced heavily by government policies, including the subsidy regime over the years, and the particular decisions made with regard to breeds and grazing practices. Here, the

majority of animals (sheep and cattle) are from traditional breeds. Despite the fact that nothing of the area is actual 'wilderness', as every square inch has been managed in some way, much is semi-natural and is home to many species of plants, insects, birds and mammals which are nationally rare or relatively rare.

A.3 Maintaining such a landscape, with biodiversity and high nature value, appreciated by local people and visitors alike, requires low-intensity farming, which entails a good deal of effort (not least given short winter days with poor weather including high winds and snow) but low income. And herein lies a major problem – the outcomes of biodiversity, flood prevention, clean air and water are not adequately rewarded in relation to the value they confer on the area and nationally.

A.4 Farming also, of course, supports a wide range of other businesses, including drystone wallers and fencers. Of course, farmers and those working in related businesses also use the shops and pubs, so all are important to the local economy.

## **B. What is needed**

B.1 There is much that local people and visitors can do to support farmers. Obvious ways are to ensure dogs are under close control (preferably on a lead) to prevent stock worrying and never allowing a dog to roam free. Keeping to paths or using open access land responsibly is also important, particularly not climbing drystone walls.

B.2 It is also essential that farmers enable greater understanding of their work. This might also mean helping local people understand more of what it means to farm for high nature value, with the hope that as voters we might want to see, and push for, effective ways of rewarding farmers for their efforts in maintaining and improving biodiversity. If we value such work, it clearly needs to be paid for, and it is inevitable that such an approach does not maximise the farmer's income through meat sales. Payment from taxes ('subsidies') for work which is of national value seems sensible, measuring the outcomes of biodiversity, flood control, etc, specific to the area (rather than a 'one size fits all' for farmland across the UK). North Pennines AONB is promoting High Nature Value farming, and it will be essential that local people are well-informed to support these moves.

B.3 The possibility of more communication about aspects of farming at local events has already been mentioned under 2c4, and putting on specific farm events, enabling local people and visitors to see more of a particular farm and its day-to-day work would be a good way to assist in generally creating more awareness and understanding.

B.4 Given our excellent local craft workers, crafted products recognising and promoting our Swaledale and Hexham Blackface sheep, Blue-faced Leicester tups and mule lambs would be popular with local people (as gifts for family and friends, as well as to have at home) and visitors alike, and further strengthen the link between farmers and the rest of the

community. Promoting these as specific Alston Moor products would raise their value to purchasers.

### C. Potential actions

	What could be done in 2019/20?	Who might do this, and how?
3c1	Use opportunities to ensure local people and visitors understand why dogs should be under close control and drystone walls treated with respect (and not climbed).	Farming community and those working with them at events; using opportunities at other events and situations, possibly with info in visitor accommodation.
3c2	Put on talks and events highlighting biodiversity and high nature value farming, promote policies	Farmers, North Pennines AONB, political party local branches?
3c3	Put on two or three farm events during the summers of 2019 and 2020, with activities, guided walks, demonstrations etc. Chance to have a go at drystone walling	Two or three farming families with volunteers willing to organise and steward events. AMP? Possible grants from AM parish council, EDC, to help with costs.
3c4	Develop video and/or moveable display showing the sheep-farming year, from tuppings in November onwards – to be available for use at sheepdog trials, Agricultural Show and in empty shops. Possible farming year calendar?	Farming community, AMP?
3c5	Develop craft items for sale, reflecting our farming life	Craft workers and artists.
3c6	Gamekeepers might hold talks and events to explain their work	Game estates

## (d) Fuel and power for the future

### A. Area of focus

A.1 It is recognised throughout the UK – in fact, across the world – that we must reduce our reliance on non-renewable fuel sources, and establish effective renewable heat and power generation. We might be able to establish a community-owned renewable energy source. Alston Moor Community Energy (AMCE) was founded in December 2015 to work on these possibilities. Several people locally have already installed solar water heating or photovoltaic cells on their roofs, and there are a few, mostly small, wind turbines also. Water is harnessed at Nenthead for a commercial water turbine, but otherwise has not been much harnessed for power in modern times, despite having been the force behind the compressed air used with great effect by the Vieille Montagne zinc-mining company at Nenthead in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as well as powering small and large mills.

A.2 Local investment in solar, hydro and wind power has become harder to achieve now that the 'feed-in tariffs' have been reduced, and no new applicants will be accepted after 1 April 2019. The installation of such sources for a specific building or group of buildings may still be financially viable, but producing power excess to one's own needs, which used to be paid for as it was uploaded to the national grid, is no longer a financially attractive option.

A.3 Biomass is another form of fuel, potentially using community woodland production to fuel biomass boilers, but is currently worthwhile only where there is no mains gas, and would require considerable planning and the willingness of homeowners to invest in such boilers. Heat pumps, becoming popular in some parts of the country, are not viable on Alston Moor because our relatively low temperatures result in a high energy need for them to run.

A.4 Of course, reducing the need for fuel is an important adjunct to reducing our reliance on non-renewable sources. Energy efficiency is of considerable importance on Alston Moor, where almost all housing stock is poor in this aspect and much could be done to improve the situation.

A.5 Electric cars are gradually becoming more affordable and more practical for an area that often entails longer distance driving to reach main centres. The possibility of a shared car scheme has been mooted, at least for people living in Alston itself, with one or more electric cars available for use by scheme members for a specified mileage rate. Clearly this requires a good network of charging points, which would also enable visitors to arrive in electric vehicles.

## **B. What is needed**

B.1 Further, and ongoing, work is needed to establish what forms of renewable energy can be used on Alston Moor, and to develop projects to establish both small and larger installations. AMCE is currently developing, in partnership with Alston Moor Federation governors, a scheme to install photovoltaic panels on the school in Alston, to provide for their own energy needs. This will need both grant- and crowd-funding to be viable.

B.2 There can be continuing and increasing installation of a range of renewable energy sources, and, in a field that is still relatively new and changing rapidly, it is important to ensure that Alston Moor is up-to-date with possibilities. We are fortunate to have AMCE, but of course, as volunteers, they need ongoing support and possibly new recruits to undertake the research and negotiation involved.

B.3 Homeowners, local landlords, providers of visitor accommodation and local businesses can all contribute to reducing fuel consumption by ensuring that their properties are as energy efficient as possible. Insulation, double-glazing and efficient boilers are among the ways that greater efficiency can be achieved. Advice is available from a variety of sources, sometimes free for those on low incomes. *Section 4(a)* considers this issue also.

B.4 For electric cars to become more widely used, one essential is a network of recharging points, easily known about and accessed. Developing this infrastructure might be a project for local businesses. Eventually big utility companies will provide this infrastructure but, as usual, rural areas like ours will be last and it will help us if try to develop recharging points now rather than wait.

### C. Potential actions

	<b>What could be done in 2019/20?</b>	<b>Who might do this, and how?</b>
3d1	Support crowd-funding for AMF photovoltaic installation being developed by AMCE	Everyone locally who is interested and can afford to help fund this innovative scheme
3d2	Investigate the potential for further photovoltaic installations	AMCE, local businesses (through AMBA?)
3d3	Continue to investigate possibilities for small and large-scale renewable energy installations of all types	AMCE, homeowners; advice and information from CAFS and others
3d4	Ensure energy efficiency for houses and businesses. Possible business (community-owned?) to develop retrofitting on Alston Moor.	Individuals; good publicity for advice available through various agencies. Support for any local businesses set up to retrofit older homes. See also <i>Section 4(a)</i>
3d5	Consider the development of an infrastructure of charging points for electric cars. Ensuring such information is available.	AMBA, AMCE; individuals making their own charging point available (for a fee). Establishing ways to add these to any local and national information sources.