

Inaugural Meeting of Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum

3pm, 14 January 2024

The Steel Club, Consett

1. Adoption of the Constitution

The meeting was updated on two late amendments to the previously circulated draft constitution, requested by Durham County Council. i.e.:

- The removal of text referring to a potential future subscription for membership
- The addition of a paragraph concerning the aspiration to hold in person meetings in different locations across the Neighbourhood Area

Christine also explained the basis for the geographical area chosen for the Neighbourhood Area.

There was then a vote to formally adopt the constitution for Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum. This was passed unanimously.

2. Appointment of officers and members of the Management Committee

The following members introduced themselves and put themselves forward for the positions of officers, as follows:

- Christine Thomas – Chair
- Mike Shiels – Secretary
- Anne Louise Grant – Treasurer
- Lucy Reed – Data Protection Officer

Members present were offered the opportunity to stand for any of the above positions. There being no further candidates, each position was put to a vote of the Forum in turn and all of the above were adopted unanimously.

The following members were then proposed to take up the 6 remaining positions on the Management Committee:

- John Million
- Kelli Turner
- Mark Russell
- Maureen Clyne (not present)
- Niamh McDonald
- Richard Lumley

Members present were offered the opportunity to stand for any of the above positions. There being no further candidates, this list was put to a vote of the Forum and adopted unanimously.

For information, short supporting statements by the Management Committee members are included in Appendix 1.

3. Progress Update

Christine provided the following updates:

- The Forum has been allocated initial Restricted Funding of £9,858. This can only be used for specific purposes that have been previously stated
- Our advisors, Locality, proposed a list of 10 local planning companies to work with us, but none were do so due to conflicts of interest. Instead, Christine identified Jo-Anne Garrick BSc (Hons) MTP(UC) MRTPI - a local independent planner who has agreed to work with us. We have secured 14 days of her work at a cost of £7,700
- We have also contracted for an initial website design using Elm Marketing (a Forum member) at a total cost of £914.
- The remainder of the grant is to be used for admin costs and liability insurance

In addition to this, we are funded for technical support from Locality, to get professional advice where needed on specialist subjects.

4. Forum website

Currently we have a basic framework – this will be put live to the public shortly. Members are invited to put forward any ideas to improve the contents.

We intend to include a form through which local businesses, charities and other organisations within the Neighbourhood Area can register to be listed on the Forum website. This is to support commerce and community activities in the area.

5. Neighbourhood Plan

The meeting discussed the process by which a neighbourhood plan will be created. All members are welcome to be involved in any part of this process, e.g., by participation in sub committees.

In an open discussion, members proposed the following as potential topics to prioritise:

- Accessibility to services for elderly and disabled
- Parking, including disabled provision
- Housing for different demographics: families, elderly, disabled
- School provision, especially local primary school for housing developments
- Provision of bus stops
- Provision of community facilities (with accessibility, wifi, parking, etc)
- Traffic calming, use of 20mph zones
- Supporting new businesses to move to Consett area
- Extra care facilities with on-site carers, service, etc.
- Quality of road signage such as street names – not clear and readable
- Opportunities for young people to encourage them to develop and grow their careers in the local area

It was noted that we should draw on previous work, surveys, etc. rather than re-inventing. We should also look at examples of good practice from neighbouring areas, such as Gateshead, Sunderland, etc.

Alan Shield has secured agreement that CANF can meet with local planners, and he is happy to facilitate this as soon as we are ready.

6. Charitable incorporated Organisation

Christine explained the concept of a Charitable incorporated Organisation (CIO). This is a mechanism that will allow us to receive charitable funds that can be deployed in this area. It was not possible to

proceed with the establishment of a CIO until the Form was formally established (i.e., today). The Management Committee will now proceed to establish the CIO.

7. Any Other Business

The following items were submitted prior to the meeting for consideration:

Objections to the Forum

Michael Hogan wanted to highlight some of the objections raised in the consultation on the establishment of the Forum. It was noted that we have tried to address these points within our constitution, which makes it clear that the Forum is open and non-partisan.

Local Signage

Jean Fraser raised concerns about the quality of street name signage. The lettering is often worn or faded, so that it is difficult to read, especially for the visually impaired.

The meeting closed at 5pm.

Appendix 1: Members of the Management Committee

Christine Thomas

I grew up in the North East and lived in Consett as a teenager. I moved to Liverpool for university, and then Nottingham to do my post-grad. I then lived and worked in London as an English teacher and manager. We returned to Consett in 2002 to bring up our three children. I have 30 years' experience teaching English. I also set up my own company in 2013, and a charity in 2018, where I am currently CEO. I was also a Trustee of the National Association of Teachers of English (NATE). I held numerous voluntary community roles - for example, Chair of the Shotley Bridge Toddler Group. Overall, with my cross-sector expertise and a great deal of management experience, I believe that I have the knowledge, experience and skills to be an effective Chair of CANF.

Mike Shiels

I was born and raised in Suffolk, but after university I worked in London for several years before moving to Consett in 2004. I am an IT manager with many years' experience delivering projects. I want to give back to my community, and for 10 years I was a school governor (including as chair) in nearby Dipton. I believe Consett has potential that remains largely untapped, and I would like to help unlock this.

Anne Louise Grant

I was born in Consett and grew up in a nearby village before moving to London in 1989. I returned with my family to live here 18 years ago with my husband. My career has been spent working in the NHS and most posts I've held have involved financial management and I'm familiar with following strict procedures to ensure good financial governance and accountability - experience I hope to be able to put to good use as treasurer. I am passionate about the environment and what we can achieve together as a community and see this as an opportunity to give back what I can.

Lucy Reed

I grew up in Consett and am looking forward to being able to play a part in developing our neighbourhood forum local plan and improving our area. I returned to Consett after completing my law degree and MSc in Forensics in Teesside and settled here to begin my post graduate legal studies in Newcastle. I am proud to be a trustee of a local organisation working with our young people and hope to use my transferable skills in helping the CANF committee wherever I can. Having worked in a Home Office organisation in a safeguarding vulnerable groups for nine years, I have had training in GDPR rules and data protection and will ensure our members' personal data is protected accordingly and that policies and procedures are in place to do so.

Maureen Clyne

My family and I used to live in Medomsley Edge 25 years ago. We left to work in South and North America. When we returned, we chose to move back to Consett as it's always been home for us. I have a working background in

- Diplomatic services
- Pipeline and environmental services/construction
- Private wealth investment
- Governance - I used to manage Board of Directors for the Calgary Chamber of Commerce

- I currently work for Durham University on a science/theological project.

We chose to return to Consett as it has special significance for our family. This is a great town with lovely people and it's important for our community to grow and expand in the right direction. At the moment, Consett has no community representation, no voice and no choice in how our town is developed. I hope we can come together as a community to ensure Consett thrives for current and future residents.

John Million

I have lived in the Consett area all of my life. Born at Murray House in 1966 I originally lived in Medomsley on North View then Benfieldside Road. I married in 1991 and moved to Park Street, then to Derwent Mews where I live to this day. I am currently employed as a Customer Relationship Manager for a Finance/Leasing & Fleet Management company and travel the country as part of my role. Due to my background and experience I feel that I best represent business and manufacturing in the area offering support and a voice to those within these fields. I am also involved with local motorcycle racing club at committee level and organise events in the area.

Richard Lumley

I was born and raised in the Consett area attending local primary and secondary schools, undertaking a Mathematics and Statistics degree at Newcastle University and PhD at Edinburgh University before returning to Consett. Since leaving university, about 20 years ago, I took on a role as an analyst for the civil service working in a range of different roles generally focused on education. The development of a neighbourhood plan will give power back to the community to develop a shared vision for our neighbourhood and help shape the local development and growth to reflect our needs. This is an important platform that we have been missing so I am keen to help shape this plan to reflect the needs of the local community.

Niamh McDonald

I am fourth-generation Consett, studying Planning at University of Newcastle and currently on a work placement at Northumberland CC, Morpeth. I have both the professional knowledge combined with the ambition to make Consett a better place for us all to live.

Mark Russell

Being part of the committee would be an honour, but I don't really know what to say about what I could bring except that I would be a person that would always allow both sides of an argument to be listened too. I am in the Fire and Security industry and have worked my way up from being a service technician to a Project Manager. I have been made a director of the training company that the owner of our company has set up to give training to new and experienced engineers in the fire industry.

Kelli Turner

I am a lawyer with over 20 years' experience, and I work in-house for Village Hotels, having previously worked in-house for two major PLC's. My legal background is real estate, corporate compliance and governance. My role as Director of ESG means chairing the Sustainability Steering Committee to target ESG compliance and lead Village Green initiatives with the aim of achieving Net Zero. I have lived in Consett for over 19 years and am committed to the local community. I am Chair of the Governors of Consett Junior School and am an active member of Consett Rugby Club. I want to see Consett thrive and be recognised for the beautiful place it is.¹

Those present at the meeting

The following attended the inaugural meeting of the Forum on 14 January 2024:

- Alan Johnson
- Andy Plant
- Angela Russell
- Anne Louise Grant
- Anthony Robson
- Barry Tupper
- Brittany Russell
- Christine Thomas
- Cllr Alan Shield
- Cllr Dominic Haney
- Corinne Walton
- D G Llewellyn
- Debra Johnson
- Ian Corkhill
- Jackie Tupper
- Jane Brown
- Jean Fraser
- Joan Heatherington
- John Million
- Judith Twiss
- Kelli Turner
- Kelly Bainbridge
- Kirstie Mckeown
- Lucy Reed
- Mark Russell
- Michael Twiss
- Mike Shiels
- Niamh McDonald
- Noreen Appleby
- Peter Thomas
- Richard Lumley
- Rosemary Morris
- Stephen Wilson
- Susan Mellor