

**Coxhoe**



**Community Partnership**

Working to make Coxhoe a better place



**Coxhoe Community Partnership  
Annual Report 2013-2014  
April 2014**

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## **Annual Report 2013-2014**

### **Introduction**

As the Chair of the Coxhoe Community Partnership it gives me great pleasure in presenting the Partnerships Annual Report for 2013/2014. We have had another very busy year.

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

Membership of the Community Partnership is low. Members of the Partnership have been instrumental in working to help sustain futures for the Active Life Centre and Coxhoe Village Hall so most of their volunteering time has been devoted to those particular causes. During the year the Treasurer retired to concentrate on other volunteering proprieties and that role is now being undertaken by another member of the partnership.

While we have achieved a great deal we could do a lot more if more volunteers came forward to lend a helping hand with their time, skills, knowledge and ideas. The implementation of the 'Big Society' is showing us that fewer services are being delivered by the Unitary Council and it is being left to communities to fend for themselves more and more. We will continue to encourage people to become involved in the Partnership and other aspects of village life.

### **Background**

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

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

The Partnership was formed in March 1998 specifically to address the play park but have driven other improvements in the village. It has worked to achieve funding and implement a range of improvement schemes within the village and its surrounding. It has been a key driver in the Limestone LinX project and has been instrumental in helping to facilitate the Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill Parish Plan 2 and helping to sustain the futures of the Active Life Centre @Coxhoe and Coxhoe Village Hall. It has also been a significant lead in the sustainability of youth services in the village, specifically in relation to the Youth Room based at the Active Life Centre. Finally, the Partnership plays a significant role in communications within the village where members have editorship responsibilities for the development and distribution of the Coxhoe Chronicle and web administration work for Coxhoe Parish Council's website, facebook and twitter accounts

Last year, having taken into account the Parish Plan, we set out our priorities as follows;

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

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

## **Priority 1: Working to Implement current projects**

### **Village Green Improvement Project (PP2 Coxhoe Action Plan C58)**

The partnership has continued to play an important part in the Village Green Working Group where progress has been made following the disappointment of a failed grant application. Members have worked to a position where tenders have been opened, final details of the works that are to be undertaken on the site have been agreed and a contractor appointed.



### **Village Signage (PP2 Coxhoe Action Plan C57)**

The Partnership is working on a scheme for improved village signage. It is to make its own application for funding as this is considered to be the best way of taking the matter forward. Progress has been hampered due to other commitments of Partnership members.

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

### **Youth Partnership Agreement**

The Partnership has been working with Durham County Council and the Active Life Centre @Coxhoe to develop a new Youth Partnership Agreement aimed at sustain and improving provision for young people in the village. As part of this the Partnership has handed over a small budget for the provision of the Youth Room to the Centre in which it is based.

Representatives of the Partnership have worked with young people to improve the youth room through redecoration and other activities. It is some time since there was a meeting between the partners so it is difficult to assess the amount of progress made.

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

#### **How we can take Coxhoe Park forward**

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



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

#### **Village Hall Update and Partnership matters**

The Partnership has a representative on the new Village Hall Management Committee as an active observer while members of the partnership are either committee members or are part of the 'Friends of Coxhoe Village Hall Group'. In such a way the partnership has taken a significant role in helping to sustain the future of the Village Hall. The Village Hall has made significant progress since the new management committee have taken over. Improvement has been substantial but have included:

- Redecoration of the many rooms in the hall some of which has been done by volunteers, including members of the partnership, and some of which has been carried out following successful grant applications to the AAP;
- The provision of a bar which has facilitated new events and bookings such as the now fortnightly Village Hall Hop, increasing income and people using the hall;
- The development of The Reading Room Book Exchange with IT facilities;
- Improvements to the main hall including new stage woodwork and access doors.

The Village Hall committee face huge challenges ahead and the Partnership is committed to helping the committee achieve a sustainable future for this important community hub. This includes a generous budget for gap funding for future development.

## Other Issues

### Governance

The Partnership has its own governance arrangements and provided members with formal agendas and resulting minutes of each meeting. It had nine formal meetings within the year with a good attendance rate. Each meeting receives an up to date treasurer's report in order to achieve high standards of financial management and transparency. A new Treasurer has effectively take over the post and During the year the Partnership submitted its Annual Returns to the Charity Commission.

### Parish Plan

During the year, and in addition to the above, the Partnership lobbied the Parish Council on a number of Parish Plan issues. It participated in a Parish Plan progress meeting with the Parish and County members in September and was able to submit its views on progress on the implementation of that Plan at the meeting. Issues agreed at that meeting were subsequently adopted by the Parish Council at their formal meeting in October. One of the issues discussed was the condition of the Old School building in Coxhoe Front Street. The Parish Council is now working with Durham County Council to secure some improvement in this unsightly building.

### Communications

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

In addition the Partnership has continued to keep up to date the Community website ([www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk)) which is full of information about what is happening in and around Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill. This remains to be Durham County Council's 'flagship' community website. In addition volunteers administer the Parish Councils facebook and twitter accounts. The website regularly has around 900-1000 vistors a month. Full details of performance are available on the Audit and Risks pages of the web site.

In November the Partnership launched the Coxhoe Community Calendar which is aimed at helping people plan



events without conflict with dates while letting the wider community know what is on and when. The calendar is on the community website and has been advertised through facebook and twitter. There was an article in the December edition of the Chronicle to promote this further. The Community Calendar is kept up to date and has been well received.

In addition to the above the Partnership has:

- received regular reports and updates on progress at the Active Life Centre;
- made representations to the Post Office against the relocation of the Post Office from the front street;
- supported residents of Quarrington Hill in their fight against the possible loss of part of an important nature reserve near the Limestone LinX route;
- made representations in respect of important planning applications in the village.

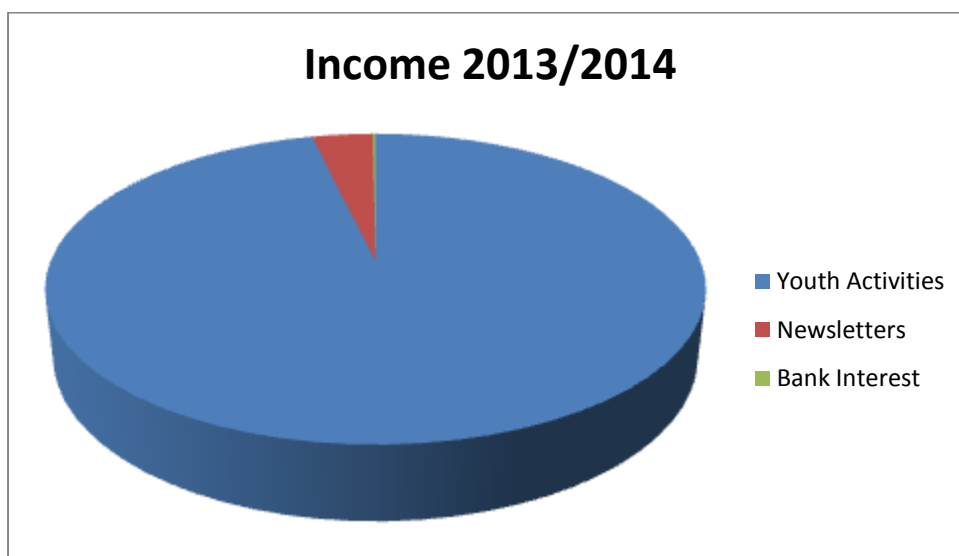
## Financial Performance

The Partnership's income was significantly less than last year. The key aspects of our financial performance are indicated below:

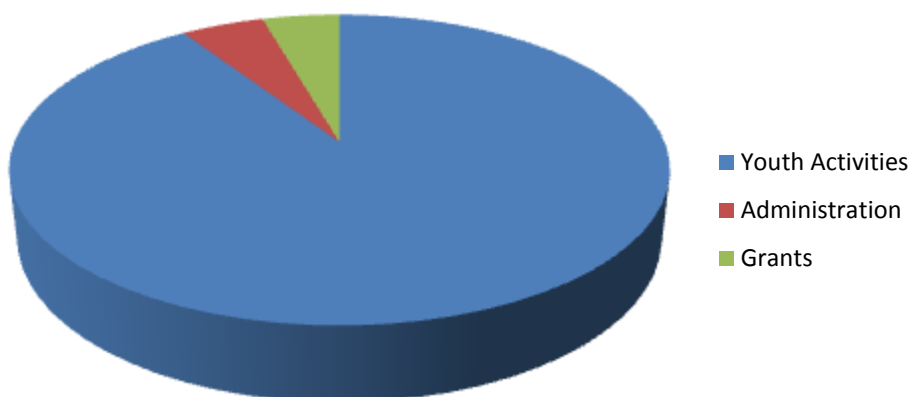
- we maintained a budget, originally £4,500 to contribute to gap funding for developments and improvements at Coxhoe Village Hall; and
- we transferred a budget for the youth room and associated activities from the Partnership to the Active Life Centre.

A big thank you is given to all funders, big and small, who allow us to carry out the much needed projects. This includes businesses who advertise in the Coxhoe Chronicle.

Our pre-audit income for the financial year 2013/2014 was £1,694.70 and our expenditure £4,454.27.46. How our income was made up and how we spend it is identified in the following charts:



## Expenditure 2013/2014



### Conclusions

I believe it is clear from the achievements set out above how important Coxhoe Community Partnership has been in helping to improve and sustain our community. For a small voluntary organisation it has done a vast amount not only to encourage physical improvements but to foster community spirit and responsibility. It will continue to do this but it needs new members and new volunteers with new skills and ideas to build on what it has achieved to date.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have attended our Partnership meetings and those who continue to work for the Partnership. Without those individuals Coxhoe would have not benefitted from the improvements that have been made as a result of their involvement and engagement. My thanks, in this regard, particularly go to those who have taken on so many responsibilities to help save important community facilities within our community on an entirely a volunteer basis.

Finally I would like to thank everyone who has listened to us, engaged with us and supported us whether financially or in kind. This includes all those organisations not specifically mentioned in this report. We know we can achieve a little on our own but a great deal in partnership with others.

**Ian Forster**

**Chair, Coxhoe Community Partnership.**