

ACTION4ACOMB (A4A) REVIEW

PRESENTED TO ACOMB PARISH MEETING VIA ZOOM

WEDNESDAY 7TH APRIL 2021

Since the beginning of 2020, and despite the challenges we've all faced because of the coronavirus pandemic, A4A has remained busy.

Great British Spring Clean

Just before lockdown last year the annual Great British Spring Clean took place. Our thanks to all the volunteers who took part in improving how our village looks. Our next Spring Clean event takes place on Saturday 5th June and we'd again welcome as many volunteers as possible. More information to follow.

Acomb's Volunteer Support Network

Once lockdown came into force many in our community found themselves shielding or feeling isolated and vulnerable. A4A responded to a request from resident Amanda Wilson who working with Lorna Farr marshalled a small army of over 40 volunteers from across the village, setting up a WhatsApp group to quickly respond to need. Volunteers were assigned specific small areas of the village to act as the point of personal contact and assistance to those requiring support, such as picking up shopping and collecting prescriptions.

In liaison with Northumberland Communities Together, Acomb's Volunteer Support Network learned what was available, such as setting up a shopping voucher system. GP referrals for those shielding was also established with volunteers able to respond rapidly. A4A registered with FareShare, a charity dedicated to the redistribution of food through working in partnership with local organisations and communities. Funding was sourced to cover the FareShare transport costs through accessing Awards for All Grant funding, a donation from Acomb's WI and residents' donations from buying masks that were generously made by a WI member. She deserves a medal!

For 18 weeks the volunteer support network received, packed and delivered food to over 40 households in the village on a weekly basis. WI members, coordinated by Jane Tait, added a touch of luxury with home bakes that were added to the food parcels and were very well received. Food and activity parcels provided by AgeUK were also distributed. Although the delivery of food was appreciated, much of the feedback expressed thanks for being able to see a familiar and welcoming face during a time when there was little other human contact for some individuals.

Warm thanks go to Vicki Firth, Landlady at the Queen's Arms for swiftly building up stores of locally accessible food items and preparing ready-made foods; to Paul Baker, our Post Master who remained open throughout the Lockdowns; to John Wilkinson who donated mountains of toilet rolls when the need was greatest; to those who provided transport to collect AgeUK parcels – Linda and Jim Wright; John Henderson and Steve Farr. Our thanks are extended to AgeUK Northumberland for organising and to the benefactor, Vicky Pattison, a local Geordie living in London wanting to support those in the North-east.

Massive thanks go to all the volunteers who took part in this work and who continue to be ready and available if needed again. The support network remains in place and volunteers have continued to 'check-in' with those on their regular patch, mainly providing emotional support.

Acomb Flood Group

There were some retirements from the flood warden group this year – many thanks to all of you who served our community so well. A4A maintains a co-ordinating role with the group and with related flood defence initiatives, and fortunately a further 4 flood wardens have been recruited and a new lead warden, Mark Dowthwaite, appointed. A4A will continue to maintain the strong links formed with the Environment Agency (EA) and Tyne Rivers Trust to ensure our village is as safe as possible from future flooding risks. We await further updates on the Natural Flood Alleviation programme.

Links remain with Newcastle University through Dr Eleanor Starkey currently acting as partners in the **PYRAMID** project. (**P**latform for **d**Ynamic, hyper-resolution, near-real time flood **R**isk **A**ssess**M**ent Integrating repurposed and novel **D**ata sources) This project will maximise the use of all relevant data to adapt hydrological/flood modelling. Enabling this to happen will be a great advantage to Acomb.

Scarecrow Trail 2020

This was held in August 2020 with many residents being involved providing an array of Keyworker Scarecrows for many to view and break the monotony of Covid-19. Prizes were given out to the 3 worthy winners. Thanks go to judges, Erica Carter; Linda Wright and her granddaughter and to Kieran. Look out for news of this year's competition!

Village Hall activities

Sadly, these had to stop with the advent of Lockdown. Awards for All grant funding successfully awarded to A4A had enabled an increase in the use of the Village Hall by providing support for a variety of activities – Let's Sing Again; Film Night; Art

Venturer's; Singing Babies. It is planned that these might start up again when it is safe to do so.

Acomb's 5-year Community Led Plan

Acomb's Community Led Plan, or CLP, has reached the end of its' 5-year span, so will be looked at again to identify what still remains to be done, and what the new issues or concerns are for the residents of Acomb Parish. One of the great successes of having a Constituted Community group is the opportunity to apply for grant funds to support Acomb projects and to date A4A has been awarded £72,826.

A parish-wide questionnaire will be carried out in the next few months. Once the returns have been analysed there will be local consultation to confirm and agree a new Acomb 5-year plan.

Approach to the Village Group

This is a local sub-group of A4A established in 2014. A virtual meeting was held recently in response to renewed concerns about the speed and volume of traffic along the A6079, and a number of issues have been passed on to the Parish Council via Erica Carter, Chair of the Group. It is reassuring that the Interactive Speed sign at the south end of the A6079 is to be repaired.

Acomblocal Web Page

A4A successfully applied for grant funding from the Parish Council for designing and building a web page for the benefit of the whole community. A professional web developer has been engaged and a small group of residents is receiving training to maintain and manage the content of the site, and good progress continues to be made. There is now an 'events' section that is open for any person or group to request a local event/activity to be entered onto the web site. Local groups have been invited to add a page about their group and activities and links have been generated through to their individual webpages. Queries or enquiries should be made through the contact link on the website, www.acomblocal.co.uk In addition to providing monthly updates to the Parish Council, A4A will now also be posting these on our own web page as well as on acomblocal.

In parallel with the community web page an acomblocal face book group has been set up and this is proving to be well used while also serving as a useful link for the web page.

We encourage everyone to become familiar with the community portal for news, information and events. There is also a section for local businesses. Any suggestions for improvements will be gratefully received.

Action4Acomb

A4A is reliant on people who can volunteer their time and energy in a number of different ways:

- By joining an action group or project, such as the Approach to the Village Group, or the Christmas Tree Event, scarecrow trail and other initiatives.
- By being available for ad hoc activities such as the distribution of leaflets, helping with an event or just attending meetings to share your views and hear what's going on.
- By joining the A4A Committee. This group ensures areas or work are undertaken and completed. The work and projects are identified by the community itself through public consultation and engagement, as well as emerging from the CLP.

Please become involved and help us make a difference to your community. Contact can be made via: action4acomb20@gmail.com

There is much to be done and we welcome your views and concerns so that together we can move forward. Progress will be achieved with effective and transparent partnerships with individuals and organisations both within Acomb and further afield. We look forward to working with our partners and you in the year ahead.