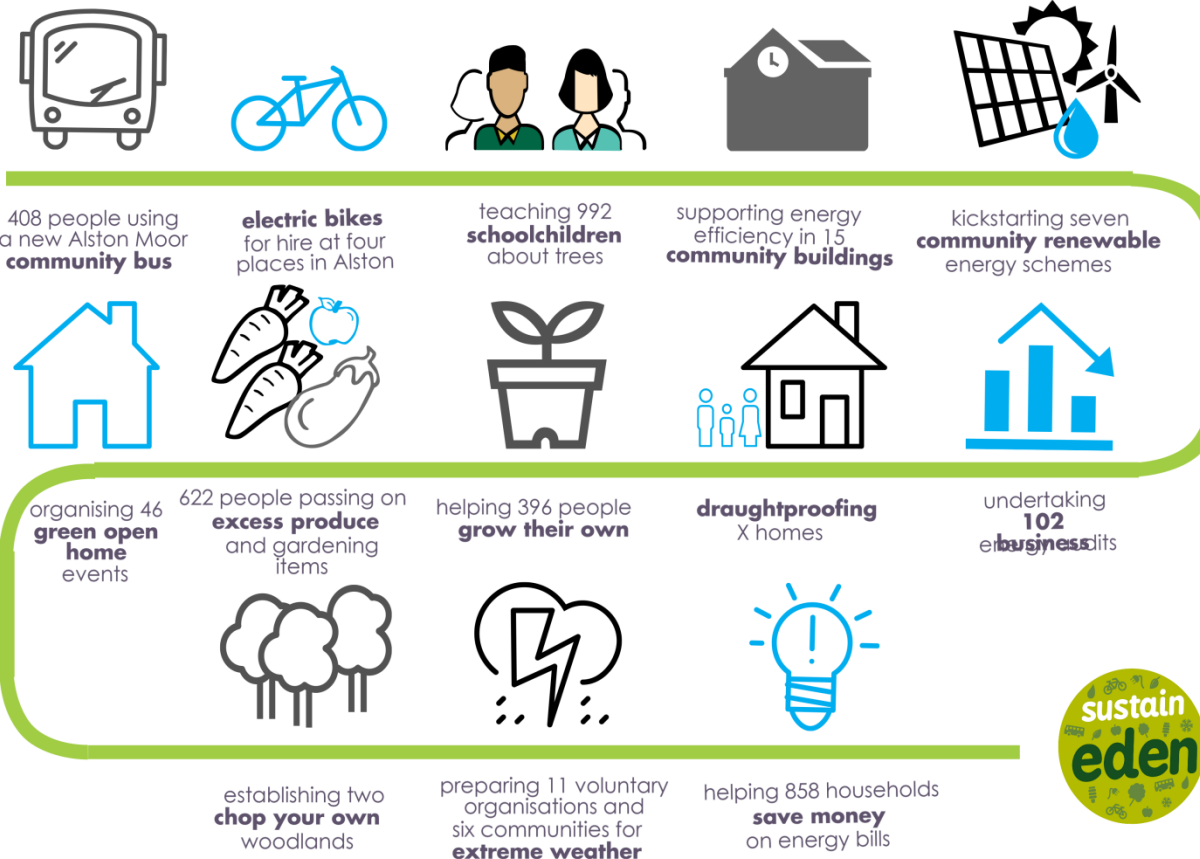


# SUSTAIN EDEN

## YEAR 3 EVALUATION REPORT



***Act, Review, Learn, Refine. An Action Learning Programme for Community Resilience to Climate Change***

***A Communities Living Sustainably Project***



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# Sustain Eden Final Evaluation: Executive Summary

## 1: About Sustain Eden

Sustain Eden was a three year project to help the communities of Eden to become more sustainable through adopting greener behaviours and adopting measures to reduce climate change and mitigate its effects. The project was made possible by a £1m grant from the Communities Living Sustainably programme of the Big Lottery. It was managed by Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) who led and co-ordinated the Sustain Eden Partnership. The project completed in March 2016.

## 2: Outcomes and Outputs

Due to the relatively short duration of Sustain Eden as a funded programme, many of its activities are still in their early stages, and are likely to lead to sustainable outcomes in the future as a result of behaviours and actions set in motion by Sustain Eden. (See Lessons Learned). Therefore, delivered outputs, which can be expected to contribute to long term outcomes, have been used as a proxy measure of outcomes in some cases.

**OUTCOME 1: Communities in Eden are provided with affordable, appropriate solutions to use energy more efficiently and reduce the incidence of fuel poverty.**

- *Fuel poor households assisted to save money on fuel bills (minimum estimate) – 435*
- *Total estimated savings on domestic fuel bills - £136,350*
- *Households making switch to better tariff (confirmed figures) – 306*
- *Energy efficiency installations in homes, community buildings and businesses (estimated from feedback surveys, plus sales of energy-saving products) – 600*
- *Total estimated reduction in carbon emissions – 78,000 kgs per annum, saving sustainable into future years*

**OUTCOME 2: Rural, isolated communities in Eden have improved access to services, including greener transport options.**

- *2 community transport schemes set up in Alston Moor giving the option for greener transport choices, with 408 passengers using the Alston Moor community bus service and on-going to end of March and 7 electric bikes available from 4 hire points, 138 hires and on-going.<sup>1</sup>*

**OUTCOME 3: Communities, households and businesses in Eden use their land and natural resources more efficiently for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.**

- *2 community woodlands established*
- *Created the community infrastructure that enabled 622 people to pass on excess produce and gardening items, with the facility sustainable into the future and being replicated in other areas of the UK*
- *396 individuals given skills and support to grow their own produce.*
- *9 'Burning Wood Well' sessions delivered to a total of around 100 people*
- *300 trees planted*

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<sup>1</sup> N.B See review of the Alston Moor Partnership project in appendices – long term outcomes have been difficult to establish for this project.

- *7 renewable energy schemes supported to move forward...including £566,000 investment raised through Community Energy Cumbria share issues*

**OUTCOME 4: Isolated and vulnerable communities in Eden are better prepared for the impacts of extreme weather caused by climate change.**

- *6 communities in Eden either with or substantially progressing towards emergency plans, which did not have them previously – with anecdotal evidence following the 2015 floods that communities with plans responded more quickly and effectively to the crisis*
- *Continuing discussions with communities that have had limited interest in planning with aim of moving them towards community emergency plans*
- *12 voluntary organisations with emergency plans in place, which improved the efficacy of the response to the 2015 floods.*
- *146 people in communities trained to deliver emergency plans*
- *Rural Briefing on climate change and its Impacts on Cumbrian communities circulated to 1800 contacts and accessible on the ACT website.*

**OUTCOME 5: Communities in Eden have a greater awareness and understanding of the impacts of climate change, and have more opportunities to undertake sustainable activities and reduce their carbon footprints.**

All the outputs itemised for previous outcomes contribute towards this outcome. In addition:

- *6000+ direct contacts with people through information stands at shows, events and website hits. This figure only includes CAfS activities. Factoring in awareness-raising events run by or contributed to by other partners probably doubles this number.*
- *Over 600 individual school pupils involved in workshops and practical activities to better understand the role of trees in climate management*

**OUTCOME 6: Communities in Eden maximise the sharing of new and existing skills and resources, embedding these practices into long term policy and creating new economic opportunities and solutions to provide sustainable activity in the longer term.**

- *The relationships forged through Sustain Eden have played an important role in shaping and strengthening the ability CAfS, CVS, ACT and other partners to influence sustainability policies and actions at a strategic level.*
- *Brought greater understanding to key statutory authorities of the significant contribution of the Third Sector in terms of creating long term community solutions.*
- *Helped to create digital learning materials from supported projects accessible via the CAfS and partners websites.*
- *Deepened the working relationships between a wide range of partner organisations.*
- *Raised the profile of CAfS as the 'go to' organisation in Cumbria on issues of community energy efficiency and climate change resilience.*

### 3: Lessons Learned

#### **It All Takes Longer Than You Think:**

1. Allow sufficient time to carry out early engagement work with communities. Think years not months to factor in sufficient up-front development work to create a strong delivery platform for actions.
2. Build on existing community infrastructures for early 'wins'.
3. Test commitment and capacity of partners – i.e. is the programme as high on their agenda as you need it to be and is their early commitment vital to long term success? Future projects aimed at building community resilience need time to enable in-depth community consultation – they are not achieved quickly.
4. Allow for seasonality when designing energy projects.
5. Where possible build-in flexible support for community groups through dedicated project officer support.

#### **Spreading Thin or Focusing In:**

1. Have a clear focus – either geographically or thematically if there is evidence of large scale interest. This is likely to maximise capacity and make it easier to collect evidence of outcomes.
2. For geographic communities find the hook that will engage people; e.g. an opportunity for shared energy generation or a major event such as a flood.
3. For communities of interest, structure the programme to engage with a wider audience than those already engaged. Existing activists and community champions need to be trained to promote good practice, share skills, and lead action learning activities; e.g. Freegle groups all over Cumbria.
4. Disseminate good practice and create an increasing interest with new partners; e.g. local gardening groups and allotment members in the Freegle example. Choose partners carefully so that a range of audiences can be built and delivery of new projects can be integrated with existing delivery by trusted organisations

#### **Partnership working:**

1. Establish a clear focus for the partnership. Is the shared agenda clear, do all parties mean the same thing? For what you want to achieve will a smaller or a larger partnership be best?
2. Make sure all partners have the capacity to actively engage with partnership activity; i.e. that they are able to more than just deliver a discrete, individual project.
3. Promote cross-fertilisation between projects. This may be easier to achieve where a programme has a tight focus either geographically or thematically.
4. Capture the impact of the programme in terms of helping to develop and strengthen other partnerships and networks.
5. Include funds for national networking and best practice sharing and project replication beyond CLS networks.

**Programme Management:**

1. Engage all members of the team up front so that the programme development is owned by the whole organisation
2. Make sure that your central resource – admin, marketing, etc. – is commensurate with the scale of the programme.
3. Make sure that your programme is as long as you can make it in order to give time for both development and delivery phases of projects.
4. With regard to energy work, or where project performance will be influenced by weather conditions, ensure that seasonal influences are taken into consideration and that you can allocate staff time flexibly.

**Influencing Behaviour Change:**

Mapping the findings from academic research<sup>2</sup> over the lessons learned from the Sustain Eden projects indicates the following recommendations:

1. Focus projects on working with groups. These could be based on a shared locality (e.g. village); shared interest; or shared place of work/education.
2. Provide facilitation wherever possible. Groups need supporting over time, not just at inception.
3. Work alongside trusted partners already working with the target group, if possible integrating with their existing activities.
4. Set out clear procedures where necessary so everyone knows what's happening and what they are doing.
5. Measure progress and provide feedback.
6. When designing a project, test your own assumptions.
7. Use a mix of strategies.

**4: Key Messages for Partners and Policy Makers**

1. Be prepared to fund development workers and facilitators – without them, grass-roots community work significant enough to bring about lasting change is not possible.
2. Be prepared to fund projects over a period of several years if you want to get community actions to a point where they will deliver sustainable outcomes and are mature enough to go forward on their own.
3. Be prepared to treat projects as opportunities for Action Learning and experimentation, but follow this up with a clear communication strategy to disseminate good practice.
4. There is relatively little evidence or research currently available on what really works in terms of encouraging behaviour change with either individuals or communities when it comes to environmental sustainability. It makes sense to try a range of approaches and to study what works best in different circumstances/with different groups.
5. Use a single issue – e.g. flooding – to galvanise interest and energy – but use this as a way into the wider issues.

**Judith Brown and John Porter - Programme Evaluators - March 2016**

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<sup>2</sup> Tips for increasing the likelihood of Behaviour Change, University of Nebraska, cited via Verdis Environmental Blog

## **2: A Short History of the Sustain Eden Programme and Partnership.**

### **2.1: The Sustain Eden Partnership:**

Substantially funded by the Big Lottery, Sustain Eden was a three-year programme set up and co-ordinated by Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS), on behalf of the Sustain Eden Partnership.

The programme represented the meeting of the aspirations of various organisations with the funding opportunity represented by the Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) fund of the Big Lottery.

The Sustain Eden Partnership brought together organisations in the local authority district of Eden in the county of Cumbria that had a strong commitment either to supporting rural communities in general or to promoting environmental good practice and indeed most of the partner organisations focused on both these issues. Sustain Eden provided the focus for “green” actions such as improving energy efficiency and local micro-energy generation to improve the sustainability both of small communities and the environment.

People living in rural communities were the key target group. Due to the demographic profile of the district, older people and people in fuel poverty were important segments within the overall target group.

CAfS was the lead partner and accountable body, providing central administration, programme management, marketing and communications plus specific activities.

The other key partners were:

- Alston Moor Partnership
- Cumbria CVS and Action with Communities (ACT), the Rural Community Council for Cumbria.
- Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (CREA)
- Cumbria Woodlands
- Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT)
- Opt4 Community Energy
- Penrith and Eden Freegle
- The Cumberland and Westmorland Herald
- Eden District Council

There was also close liaison between the partnership and statutory organisations such as The Environment Agency, Cumbria County Council, the Police and Fire Services.

### **2.2: Area Profile:**

Eden is an entirely rural area with many dispersed and disparate communities. Some communities are isolated and easily cut off from services taken for granted in more urban settings. They face a variety of challenges but the two which are most evident are:

- climate change
- the increasing costs of energy consumption.

The vulnerability of isolated valley and hill communities was dramatically shown in the floods of December 2015 and January 2016 which swept away vital bridges and roads and left a trail of devastation in Eden communities such as Appleby, Eamont Bridge, Glenridding and Pooley Bridge.

The incidence of fuel poverty in Eden is higher than the national average, with one community (Crosby Ravensworth) among the 10% of most fuel poor in England.<sup>3</sup>

Figures for the constituency of Penrith and the Borders show that 19,000 homes are without connection to mains gas; 6,000 homes have the worst energy ratings of F and G, with residents three times more likely to live in thermally inefficient homes than elsewhere in the country; around 4,000 homes are classified as fuel-poor.<sup>4</sup> Many homes are well over 100 years old which means thermal improvements are problematical due to stone walls with no foundations.

Many experts predict current lower prices for oil to last only for a few years<sup>5</sup>. The high cost of heating oil is likely to remain a critical issue in Eden with its high levels of hard-to-heat housing stock with limited connection to mains gas.

### **2.3: The CLS Grant and Timescale:**

Sustain Eden was awarded a total of £955,270 for the three year project, starting in February 2013. It took three months to set up the program which left 33 months as the main delivery period for the programme. The end of the programme was been phased with different projects finishing at different times, the last being those delivered directly by CAfS, which completed in March 2016.

### **2.4: Project Mix:**

The Sustain Eden programme linked high level, strategic outcomes (see Section 3) with the delivery of a wide range of individual projects designed to develop community resilience. The broad base of partner organisations helped achieve a geographic and demographic spread, including businesses.

There was little available evidence either locally or nationally on how to achieve the degree of behaviour change required or how to secure ownership of solutions at the level of individual communities. The partnership approach enabled experimentation to see which measures were most effective. But limited resources meant the individual projects were relatively small scale, reducing the impact and potential for quantitative contribution to the strategic outcomes.

**In addition to the quantifiable achievements, it is important to consider Sustain Eden's impact as an example of positive Action Learning. The learning has been considerable and valuable in terms of shaping future support for working with communities on the issue of resilience.**

## **3: Outcomes, Outputs and Indicators**

Sustain Eden set out six programme outcomes in its delivery plan:

1. Communities in Eden are provided with affordable, appropriate solutions to use energy more efficiently and reduce the incidence of fuel poverty.

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<sup>3</sup> Cumbria Intelligence Observatory – Fuel Poverty Report 2015

<sup>4</sup> Association for Conservation of Energy, Energy efficiency in Penrith and the Borders, February 2016

<sup>5</sup> Oil and Energy Insider March 2015



2. Rural, isolated communities in Eden have improved access to services, including greener transport options.
3. Communities, households and businesses in Eden use their land and natural resources more efficiently for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.
4. Isolated and vulnerable communities in Eden are better prepared for the impacts of extreme weather caused by climate change.
5. Communities in Eden have a greater awareness and understanding of the impacts of climate change, and have more opportunities to undertake sustainable activities and reduce their carbon footprints.
6. Communities in Eden maximise the sharing of new and existing skills and resources, embedding these practices into long term policy and creating new economic opportunities and solutions to provide sustainable activity in the longer term.

**This section explores the contribution towards each of these outcomes, by combining the relevant outputs from each of the projects.**

It is important to explain the reason for this approach. Ideally, each project would have been in a position to carry out follow-up work to find out the extent and depth of outcomes achieved by the actions taken. In reality this has not always proved possible. The reasons have varied between projects and these are explored in more detail in the individual project reports in the appendices. In summary, however, the key reasons why it has been difficult to determine outcomes with any reliability include:

- Insufficient resource at individual project levels to carry out survey work, especially where this required telephone follow up with individuals.
- Considerable time-lag between people receiving advice and support and actually taking actions that will lead to outcomes. This is particularly the case where a change in behaviour or the installation of an energy efficiency measure is required.
- Short time scale of projects. Measuring energy consumption for a draught-proofed property really needs to be done over more than one year as consumption is affected by temperatures as well as energy efficiency. The bus and bike projects in Alston Moor took much longer than anticipated to set up and therefore have not run long enough to establish sufficient use to yield meaningful data – transport schemes need to establish a pattern for reliability before they replace private transport options. The emergency plans supported by this project have yet to be tested (though pre-existing ones were tested and proved effective, suggesting this work will lead to positive outcomes in future.)

Looking at the lessons learned through the Sustain Eden programme, a key one is that projects to change personal and community behaviour need considerably longer than three years in order to achieve directly evidenced outcomes.

In addition, the outcomes set out in the Sustain Eden plan were very ambitious for a budget of one million pounds spread across different themes and several individual communities - and with the costs of delivery over a large geographic area.

By contrast the three other CLS-funded projects in the North West have benefited from 5 year time-scales and programmes more tightly focussed geographically (L8 Living Sustainably covers 2 wards; The Irwell Valley project, 3), or thematically (Real Food Wythenshawe is entirely focused on growing and cooking sustainable food.)

Given these challenges, therefore, the approach for this evaluation has been to measure outputs which previous experience and or research suggests will contribute to the desired behaviour changes which are likely to result in the Sustain Eden outcomes.

**OUTCOME 1: Communities in Eden are provided with affordable, appropriate solutions to use energy more efficiently and reduce the incidence of fuel poverty.**

**Outcome 1 Statistics:**

- *Fuel poor households assisted (minimum estimate) – 435*
- *Total estimated savings on domestic fuel bills - £136,350*
- *Households making switch to better tariff (confirmed figures) – 306*
- *Energy efficiency installations in homes, community buildings and businesses (estimated from feedback surveys, plus sales of energy-saving products) – 600*
- *Total estimated reduction in carbon emissions – 78,000 kgs per annum, saving sustainable into future years*

Five projects made a direct contribution towards this outcome:

- Cold to Cosy Homes (CAfS)
- Resource Efficiency (CAfS)
- Sustainable Community Solutions (CAfS)
- OPT4 (PACT/Opt4)
- Business Resource Efficiency (CREA)

Cold to Cosy Homes and OPT4 were the two projects specifically targeting fuel poverty. Support was given to provide general advice on energy efficiency, help to switch to more appropriate tariffs and the installation of draught-proofing. Given that any form of ‘means testing’ was inappropriate to these schemes, identifying people as being ‘fuel poor’ proved tricky. A total figure of 435 fuel poor households helped has been derived from a combination of measures and calculations. These include:

- beneficiaries who self-identify as ‘struggling to pay fuel bills’;
- a percentage of people living in circumstances liable to contribute to fuel poverty such as single wall constructed houses, no access to mains gas and being elderly;
- analysing post-code data to establish percentage of beneficiaries living in the wards with highest incidence of fuel poverty.

These ‘rough and ready’ calculations provide a conservative estimate of the numbers of fuel poor beneficiaries. OPT4 produced a more detailed analysis of assumptions and calculations<sup>6</sup>. It should be noted that, using the 10%+ of income definition of fuel poverty, Eden is among the most fuel poor districts in England mainly due to the nature of the housing stock (44% + is single wall construction) and the heavy reliance on oil-fired heating in rural communities.

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<sup>6</sup> OPT4 Fuel Poverty Statistics, April 2014 – January 2015

We have created bench line figures for average savings made when people switch energy suppliers and average savings in both fuel costs and carbon emissions resulting from the installation of draught-proofing measures. But figures vary according to sources and 'average savings' in terms of cost are unreliable due to fluctuations in energy prices.

Taking the average saving per household quoted by Which Switch of £191 and multiply by the number of households definitely known to have switched via Sustain Eden projects (306), we can assume a **minimum saving of over £58,000** per annum over the programme as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

To this can be added between £25 and £50 per annum for each installation of draught-proofing measures (Energy Saving Trust figures). If we take a median saving of £37.50 for each of the 150 homes in which draught-proofing measures were installed, this equates to an annual saving of £5625.



*Draught-proofing work*

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<sup>7</sup> OPT4 work with clients through the switching process and can therefore provide an exact figure of total savings to end of Jan 2015 of £43,494

The Energy Saving Trust estimates an annual reduction of 130kg CO2 emissions for average households installing effective draught-proofing measures. Feedback from people, businesses and community buildings assisted through Sustain Eden projects confirms that around 300 installed energy efficiency measures. To this figure we may add sales of energy-saving products by CAfS to Eden residents. Many of the products installed will minimise carbon emissions to a greater degree than draught-proofing. If we assume they all reduce emissions to the same, minimum level, it can be calculated that assistance via **Sustain Eden has resulted in a reduction in carbon emissions of at least 78,000 kgs**, which is sustainable into the future, providing on-going year-on-year savings.

There was a demand for full energy audits and detailed technical advice on refurbishment of properties, particularly traditional Cumbrian housing stock, which could not be met within the resources of Sustain Eden. This demonstrates an appetite for change among householders if the right support can be made available.

## **OUTCOME 2: Rural, isolated communities in Eden have improved access to services, including greener transport options.**

### **Outcome 2 Statistics:**

- *2 community transport schemes set up in Alston Moor giving the option for greener transport choices, with 408 passengers using the Alston Moor community bus service and on-going to end of March and 7 electric bikes available from 4 hire points, 138 hires and on-going.<sup>8</sup>*

Most of the Sustain Eden projects reached out to rural communities by taking seminars and advice sessions out to villages and by offering support and advice online (CAfS, Freegle) and by phone (OPT 4).

Two greener transport options— a community bus and an electric bike scheme - were created in the isolated community of Alston Moor. The key challenge facing rural transport schemes is establishing a critical mass of users. This in turn is dependent upon the service being user-friendly and reliable; essential factors if services are to compete successfully with the convenience of private transport. Detailed conclusions from the Alston Moor projects are discussed in Appendix 1.



*1Checking the lift on the Community Bus*

<sup>8</sup> N.B See review of the Alston Moor Partnership project in appendices – long term outcomes have been difficult to establish for this project.



**OUTCOME 3: Communities, households and businesses in Eden use their land and natural resources more efficiently for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.**

**Outcome 3 Statistics:**

- *2 community woodlands established*
- *622 people passing on excess produce and gardening items.*
- *396 individuals given skills and support to grow their own produce.*
- *9 'Burning Wood Well' sessions delivered to a total of around 100 people*
- *300 trees planted*
- *7 renewable energy schemes supported to move forward...including £566,000 investment raised through Community Energy Cumbria share issues*

Various renewable energy projects supported through CAfS Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Community Solutions projects and through the Alston Moor hydro project have the potential of contributing to this outcome. The development timeframe for these complex projects is considerable. The work done to date with the Alston Moor hydro scheme has formed the basis of a potential new project, the Alston Moor Greenprint, for which funding is currently being sought. In the more immediate term, the community woodlands scheme proved an effective and popular way of providing community access to bio-mass fuel. Cumbria Woodlands are committed to exploring options for continuing this project working with partners such as the National Trust and the Woodland Trust.



*Woodfuel from Morland Community Woodland*

**OUTCOME 4: Isolated and vulnerable communities in Eden are better prepared for the impacts of extreme weather caused by climate change.**

**Outcome 4 Statistics:**

- *6 communities in Eden either with or substantially progressing towards emergency plans, which did not have them previously – with anecdotal evidence following the 2015 floods that communities with plans responded more quickly and effectively to the crisis*
- *Continuing discussions with communities that have had limited interest in planning with aim of moving them towards community emergency plans*
- *12 voluntary organisations with emergency plans in place, which improved the efficacy of the response to the 2015 floods.*

- *146 people in communities trained to deliver emergency plans*
- *Rural Briefing on climate change and its Impacts on Cumbrian communities circulated to 1800 contacts and accessible on the ACT website.*
- *Community emergency planning moved higher up the agenda of the Community Resilience Network and the network firmly established as part of the Cumbria Floods Partnership*
- *71 parish councils provided with the Small Communities Emergency Planning Template, encouraging community discussion and increased awareness*

Cumbria CVS and ACT jointly contributed to this outcome, working directly with several communities to create action plans in the event of flooding and other extreme weather emergencies. This was a challenging and time-consuming process requiring a high degree of up-front community development work. At project end, six communities have action plans in place or well-advanced that did not have them before. There is some anecdotal evidence that communities that already had plans in place were able to respond more quickly to the recent flood emergencies.



*Emergency Planning Conference*

The project has involved on-going discussions with communities with limited interest in planning. CVS and ACT have produced project resources and used these to stimulate community discussion as a way to raise awareness and create an appetite for community level planning.

This project worked with both statutory and Third Sector support agencies. Various frontline staff and organisations worked together for the first time to implement co-ordinated responses to emergencies. Support provided by CVS and ACT to the Cumbria Resilience Network enabled that partnership to develop and grow to the extent where it now leads on the community resilience theme within the Cumbria Floods Partnership, working closely with the Environment Agency and Cumbria County Council. This is a significant legacy of Sustain Eden.

The project paid for the training of frontline staff from various Third Sector agencies, enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to needs of vulnerable clients in the event of an emergency.

The severe storms and flooding that occurred over the winter of 2015/16 have pushed the issue of community emergency planning higher up the agenda. This has implications for some of the legacy of Sustain Eden, which are discussed in more detail in Appendix 1.



*The floods of December 2015  
devastated several Eden  
communities*

**OUTCOME 5: Communities in Eden have a greater awareness and understanding of the impacts of climate change, and have more opportunities to undertake sustainable activities and reduce their carbon footprints.**

***Outcome 5 Statistics:***

All the statistics itemised for previous outcomes contribute towards this outcome. In addition:

- *6000+ direct contacts with people through information stands at shows, events and website hits. This figure only includes CAfS activities. Factoring in awareness-raising events run by or contributed to by other partners probably doubles this number.*
- *Over 600 individual school pupils involved in workshops and practical activities to better understand the role of trees in climate management*

The Sustain Eden message directly and indirectly, has reached several thousand people in Eden through its services, marketing, publicity and information-giving. It also achieved a wider audience across Cumbria through local and regional media. Although it is impossible to measure the impact of awareness-raising activities, there are a number testimonials from those who have been directly involved in projects. Examples of these have come from:

- Freegle (beginning to grow own vegetables)
- The Green Build Festival
- Cold to Cosy Homes etc. (installing energy saving/renewable energy production measures)
- Tree Whisperers schools education project (increased understanding of the role of trees in climate management)
- Business Resource Efficiency surveys (business installing energy-saving measures)
- Various stands, websites and resources

**OUTCOME 6: Communities in Eden maximise the sharing of new and existing skills and resources, embedding these practices into long term policy and creating new economic opportunities and solutions to provide sustainable activity in the longer term.**

***Outcome 6: Qualitative Outcomes:***

- *The relationships forged through Sustain Eden have strengthened the ability CAfS, CVS, ACT and other partners to influence sustainability policies and actions at a strategic level.*
- *Brought greater understanding to key statutory authorities of the significant contribution of the Third Sector in terms of creating long term community solutions.*
- *Helped to create digital learning materials from supported projects accessible via the CAfS and partners websites.*
- *Deepened the working relationships between a wide range of partner organisations.*
- *Raised the profile of CAfS as the 'go to' organisation in Cumbria on issues of community energy efficiency and climate change resilience.*

The relationships forged through Sustain Eden have played an important role in shaping and strengthening the ability CAfS, CVS, ACT and other partners to influence sustainability policies and actions at a strategic level. Examples include:

- CAfS has taken the lead in the creation of Community Energy Cumbria, a community-owned Industrial and Provident Society, for the generation of renewable energy.
- CAfS is a high-level partner with the Lake District National Park Authority in the Lake District Low Carbon Energy Futures Project.
- CAfS have been involved in briefing the local MP, the MP for Civil Society and Eden Councillors
- CAfS has hosted high-level consultation events in partnership with DECC and Greenpeace.

These activities have enhanced CAfS's profile as the lead organisation in Cumbria on issues of environmental and community sustainability. CAfS staff have been elected onto the boards of the two Local Action Groups that will manage the new LEADER programme in Cumbria. This will ensure that environmental sustainability will be strongly championed in the delivery of this rural development programme.

External factors, such as central government policy, the availability of finance, the cost of energy on global markets and extreme weather events will have a strong influence upon the shaping of local



environmental and sustainability agendas in future, but a model now exists for people at community level to share and gain skills which will enable them to be more informed and take more active roles in local policy making actions such as Neighbourhood Planning.

## **4: Lessons Learned: Achieving Impact:**

### **4a: It All Takes Longer Than You Think:**

Reviewing all the Sustain Eden projects, the biggest single lesson that comes across loud and clear is that the programme was not long enough to maximise the achievement of outcomes. Community-focussed projects take time, some of the reasons we consider here.

#### ***Community Infrastructure***

- Projects built on existing activities where the organisational infrastructure for delivery was in place, for example Freegle and CREA, were able to hit the ground running. Brand new projects such as OPT4, Tree Whisperers, and Community Woodlands required a substantial development work before any activities could be delivered.

#### ***Partnership and Community Capacity***

- The capacity of the partners, mainly voluntary and grant-funded organisations, affects delivery. The more capacity, the more effective the project is likely to be. For example, the electric bike and community bus schemes in Alston Moor required a significant commitment of the development officer's time to get them off the ground and would not have happened without this input.
- Projects delivered through grass-roots organisations risk diverting energy into chasing grants to sustain activity; e.g. it was a significant factor in the decision of OPT4 not to continue beyond the Sustain Eden grant. For more on lessons learned regarding partnership working, see Section 5.
- Nearly all the projects were ultimately dependent upon community volunteers to make things happen. Some communities have a bigger pool of volunteers with a diversity of skills and demographics. Whilst community activism is essential in order to create resilience, it is still a comparatively scarce commodity.
- Linking into partnership activities is an effective way of maximising impact and developing new and useful network relationships for the future. However, when linked to another organisation's funding application, capital project or decision-making cycle, implementation can be slower than planned; e.g. the South Tynedale Railway Trust was very positive and productive for the Alston Moor electric bike scheme, but certain activities had to be driven by the pace of the STRT refurbishment project.<sup>9</sup>
- A substantial amount can be achieved by community groups if the right interventions and advice are available at the time they need it. Community projects develop at their own pace and support must be flexible to respond to developing needs. The Alston Moor project, for

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the Railway have now ceased to be a hire point for the electric bikes due to a change in priorities and personnel – another example of the risks involved in community partnerships.

example, showed that a relatively small amount of funding for a central project officer role can have benefits for large numbers of community groups.

### **Seasonality**

- It appears people only think about the cost of energy or thermal improvements when the thermometer drops and the wind is driving the rain through badly fitted windows. This fact has significant implications for planning the delivery schedule for energy efficiency schemes.

### **Recommendations for Future Programmes**

1. Allow sufficient time to carry out early engagement work with communities. Think years not months to factor in sufficient up-front development work to create a strong delivery platform for actions.
2. Build on existing community infrastructures for early 'wins'.
3. Test commitment and capacity of partners – i.e. is the programme as high on their agenda as you need it to be and is their early commitment vital to long term success? Future projects aimed at building community resilience need time to enable in-depth community consultation – they are not achieved quickly.
4. Allow for seasonality when designing energy projects.
5. Where possible build-in flexible support for community groups through dedicated project officer support.

### **4b: Spreading Thin or Focusing In:**

In their national evaluation of the CLS projects, Groundwork categorises Sustain Eden as a medium sized project in terms of the population of the programme area.<sup>10</sup>

*“Another aspect of the difference of scale across the CLS projects .... This ranges from small wards in inner city areas to dispersed rural communities. The Eden District in Cumbria covers an area of 2,156 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the second largest district in England and Wales. It also has the lowest population density of any English district meaning that Sustain Eden can be working with settlements of less than 100 people. This diversity of scale has very practical implications for the support resources needed to impact on behaviour in a meaningful way throughout the duration of the project.”*

This is borne out by the findings of the Sustain Eden programme and its partners. The advantages and disadvantages taking on a broad range of themes across many communities or of seeking either geographical or themed focuses are considered below.

### **A Geographic Focus**

- There are advantages in a focus on a single community. The Alston Moor Partnership encompassed two different community transport schemes and a plan to develop a community-owned renewable energy generation. This brought together a range of local partners, businesses and the County Council, and laid a solid foundation for further development. The Alston Moor Partnership is now seeking funding for the development and implementation of a more strategic approach; the Alston Moor 'Greenprint' project.

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<sup>10</sup> CLS Behaviour Change Report, January 2015.

- Having a part time project worker proved essential stitching together funding opportunities into a coherent whole and enabling small but significant outputs towards health and well-being, and economic regeneration agendas.

### ***Creating Critical Mass***

- The other approach trialled, rather than a single community focus is development of a single theme delivered over a wider area. Projects such as Freegle and OPT4 did just this. However, in rural areas there are obvious difficulties. OPT4 struggled due to the lack of sufficient volumes of customers, delivery of energy advice sessions was costly and potential outcomes difficult to track. Whilst participating individuals benefited, it is difficult to assess how far these individual outcomes may go towards creating a critical mass of behaviour change. Much will depend taking forward the learning and practice by local activists.
- Without large additional resources, achieving a critical mass dealing with fuel poverty was always going to be difficult. Although Eden is estimated to have the highest incidence of fuel poverty of all the districts in Cumbria<sup>11</sup>, there are relatively few areas of concentrated deprivation where efforts can be focused and target groups easily identified.

### ***Complementary Models***

The two approaches can, however, come together in a single community; as was the case with Alston Moor. Direct engagement with residents on several themes in meetings and surveys increased the number of those volunteering to become involved. Creating a critical mass within a single population can be easier to achieve. In an area like Eden this approach could be used to create nodes of 'deep' actions, linked together through more generalist and light-touch activities such as awareness-raising, providing advice and sharing learning and know-how.

A countywide focus on a single theme, such as developing community woodlands, has the potential to generate critical mass if co-ordinated so that lessons are shared between localities, and generic support and expertise exists; e.g. how to handle insurance or how to approach landowners. In this model a town or village is replaced by a more coherent 'community of interest.'

Working with communities of interest has advantages in that some groups are already engaged in an issue and supporting them to achieve more can lead to early 'wins.' A whole population model working with a geographic community may have greater potential to encourage new behaviours across a wider spectrum of the population (See Section 6 for more on Behaviour Change).

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<sup>11</sup> Cumbria Intelligence Observatory, Fuel Poverty Briefing, May 2015.



*Electric Bikes – Linking the Community in Alston Moor*

### **Recommendations for Future Programmes**

1. Have a clear focus – either geographically or thematically if there is evidence of large scale interest. This is likely to maximise capacity and make it easier to collect evidence of outcomes.
2. For geographic communities find the hook that will engage people; e.g. an opportunity for shared energy generation or a major event such as a flood.
3. For communities of interest, structure the programme to engage with a wider audience than those already engaged. Existing activists and community champions need to be trained to promote good practice, share skills, and lead action learning activities; e.g. Freegle groups all over Cumbria.
4. Disseminate good practice and create an increasing interest with new partners; e.g. local gardening groups and allotment members in the Freegle example. Choose partners carefully so that a range of audiences can be built and delivery of new projects can be integrated with existing delivery by trusted organisations

## **5: Lessons Learned - Effective Partnerships and Programme Management:**

### **5a: Partnership working**

#### **Shared Agendas**

The Sustain Eden partnership came together initially as a practical response to an opportunity – the CLS funding. The member organisations of the Sustain Eden partnership were all organisations for which 'green issues' loomed fairly or very high on their agendas. These agendas overlapped in



several areas, but were not identical. Members brought projects to the table based on their own existing practice or ideas for new activities. The wide diversity of actions within the Sustain Eden programme was largely a result of this approach, with the other influencing factor being the geography of Eden. There has been strength in this diversity, though the lack of a single, overriding vision has also been a challenge. High level aspirations were shared and various items on agendas were complementary and mutually supportive. At the same time, there were sometimes differing priorities when it came to actions on the ground.

### ***More than Just the Delivery Partnership***

There is clear and positive evidence that partnership working has been enhanced through the Sustain Eden programme. It provided the opportunity for organisations that had not previously worked together to do so. For example the Sustain Eden grant created the Alston Moor Development Officer post, which created the capacity for the AMP to work with Cumbria County Council on the community bus project.

Projects and practices piloted through Sustain Eden – as diverse as community emergency response planning, community energy schemes and community woodlands – have created models that engage with a broad range of partners from the County Council to individual businesses. Sustain Eden has strengthened the network of overlapping partnerships at both strategic and grass-roots levels.

The degree of cross-fertilisation between projects and organisations varied with some having little to do with each other outside of the partnership meetings. Others, on the other hand, benefitted to a substantial degree from the opportunity to work together. This was a consequence of the diverse nature of the projects supported through the programme. Some had a much better fit with each other than others.

The issue of joint bidding is important. The Sustain Eden partnership provided a way to integrate capacity and administration to pull together funding for a number of projects that were too small or niche to go it alone. The Lottery Funding was ‘new’ money that would otherwise not have reached vulnerable communities.

Beyond the Sustain Eden partnership itself, the programme has been instrumental in supporting and stimulating other partnerships. It was the Sustain Eden support that enabled Cumbria CVS and ACT to facilitate the development of the Cumbria Resilience Network. This has already been highlighted as a significant legacy of the programme.

The CLS funding has also provided additional organisational stability for CAFS itself. This has led to a strengthening of systems and governance, and built its credibility as a ‘go to’ organisation on issues of energy efficiency and fuel poverty. Most importantly, a strong foundation has been created on which to develop and build new partnerships such as Community Energy Cumbria. CAFS is now seeking to actively develop partnerships to address the fuel poverty agenda, based on the models established under Sustain Eden

### ***Recommendations for Future Programmes***

1. Establish a clear focus for the partnership. Is the shared agenda clear, do all parties mean the same thing? For what you want to achieve will a smaller or a larger partnership be best?

- 2 Make sure all partners have the capacity to actively engage with partnership activity; i.e. that they are able to more than just deliver a discrete, individual project.
- 3 Promote cross-fertilisation between projects. This may be easier to achieve where a programme has a tight focus either geographically or thematically.
- 4 Capture the impact of the programme in terms of helping to develop and strengthen other partnerships and networks.
- 5 Include funds for national networking and best practice sharing and project replication beyond CLS networks.

### **5b: Programme Management:**

CAfS had plenty of experience of delivering its own projects. Managing Sustain Eden was its first experience of leading and co-ordinating a multi-partner programme, successfully developing and implementing new systems to enable this to happen effectively. This has clearly strengthened CAfS as an organisation. Building more efficient systems and governance has provided the foundation for CAfS to act in a similar capacity in the future, especially with regard to Sustain Eden legacy projects.

#### ***Recommendations for Future Programmes***

1. Engage all members of the team up front so that the programme development is owned by the whole organisation
2. Make sure that your central resource – admin, marketing, etc. – is commensurate with the scale of the programme.
3. Make sure that your programme is as long as you can make it in order to give time for both development and delivery phases of projects.
4. With regard to energy work, or where project performance will be influenced by weather conditions, ensure that seasonal influences are taken into consideration and that you can allocate staff time flexibly.



*Carrying out a draught proofing survey*

## 6: Lessons Learned: Influencing Behaviour Change:

The objective of many of the Sustain Eden projects was to change aspects of people's behaviour. Actions provided access to information, advice, skills and infrastructure intended to help people adopt 'greener' behaviours, particularly in relation to reducing energy consumption.

There has been considerable research into what motivates people to change behaviour, particularly regarding climate change issues.<sup>12</sup> These are set out in some depth in Groundwork's recent CLS report, which has already been quoted. The purpose of this section is to examine what Sustain Eden has learned in practical terms about changing the way people behave with regard to specific actions, such as reducing their energy consumption.

There are various barriers which prevent people from changing behaviour:

- Lack of infrastructure, knowledge or skills
- Lack of finance or other necessary resource
- Lack of trust in alternative behaviours to provide an improved outcome – 'better the devil you know'
- Lack of energy, time, will: other priorities affect the individual, household, business or community.
- Feeling it is too complicated and unrewarding – sustainability and climate change are complex issues; some people can be put off; what difference can I/we make?
- Taking action will affect lifestyle.
- Behavioural inertia – humans have a built in tendency to prefer consistency to change.

The Sustain Eden projects have had successes in overcoming some of these barriers.

### 6a: Infrastructure, knowledge and skills:

People will get involved when they understand a project and feel rewarded being part of it. For example, Community Woodlands brought together two aspirations – access to free wood for individuals and a desire for improved woodland management by the landowners. Free wood in exchange for labour was combined with exercise and good companionship. However, it required organisational support from Cumbria Woodland Trust to broker this solution, bring groups together and provide technical advice and support.

Freegle is another good example. The high usage of the dedicated gardening section of the website and the engagement in free seed events shows that there was a latent demand for gardening equipment, plants, seeds and advice. This was matched by a desire from others to pass on unwanted items and to share expertise. Freegle created the infrastructure to make that exchange as easy as possible.

The advice sessions and seminars run by CAfS, Cumbria Woodlands, CREA, CVS and others also contributed to this enabling infrastructure by providing reliable information and hand-holding support to help individuals and communities to navigate technical areas.

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<sup>12</sup> e.g. *Investigating the Long-Term Impacts of Climate Change Communications on Individuals' Attitudes and Behaviour* Rachel A. Howell Environmental Behaviour Journal 2014

With these pieces of infrastructure in place it becomes much easier for people to change their behaviour. However, whilst having the infrastructure is necessary, it is not, on its own, sufficient to effect behaviour change. The reasons for this are likely to include one or more of the other bullet points listed above.

## **6b: Personal Barriers to Behaviour Change:**

### ***i): Lack of Resources:***

Lack of personal resources, particularly lack of finance or physical constraints, is an obvious barrier.

*“Green Build Festivals don’t really address the issue of fuel poverty because you have the capital to invest to implement the technologies.”*

Having said this, some low cost measures have been demonstrated with the Green Build Festival and the Cold2Cosy Homes project promoted inexpensive energy saving actions. The energy advice session reduced some financial barriers by helping people switch to cheaper energy tariffs. There are initiatives which can provide financial assistance to householders and businesses and up-to-date information on such schemes is available on the CAFS website.

### ***ii): Lack of trust***

Lack of trust in the alternatives seems to be a key barrier to change. There appears to be a general mistrust of the energy providers in terms of customer care, and of market volatility. Will a cheaper tariff mean poorer customer service, or will they have keep on switching provider continually to get the best deal? Alternatives may simply also be less convenient; for example replacing car journeys with public transport options.

There is comparatively little that the Sustain Eden project can do to help remove this barrier in any direct way. However, a consistent partnership message enhanced by higher profiles and credibility, may engender increased public trust. The higher the degree of public trust in organisations the more likely are people to respond positively to their messages.

Certainly a lesson from the fuel poverty aspect of the project was that it worked best when technical advice and expertise was delivered alongside known and trusted partners- for example a housing association - who already engaging with the target audience, integrating advice events with existing community engagement activity.

### ***iii): Competing Priorities and Perceived Complexities:***

Change that is desired for the greater good of society depends to some extent on creating a new behavioural norm; for example, the changed attitude to the social acceptability of smoking in public places or drinking and driving. One way that projects such as Sustain Eden can influence public opinion is to help create critical mass within specific communities. For example, using electric bikes to get around Alston may become the default behaviour in good weather.

### ***iv): Motivations***

Individuals may feel overwhelmed by the challenges of climate change to the extent that they disconnect from the message, but they may respond very positively to a project that gives them access to free wood or enables them to share their gardening expertise or to make their house less draughty or that gives them a real sense of community. The mark of a successful project is that it



finds the right ‘hooks’ and is prepared to use different ones for different target audiences to engage diverse motivators that enable environment-friendly behaviours.

### ***v): Behavioural Inertia and Sustaining Change***

Awareness of an issue (e.g. climate change), even when matched by a positive attitude rarely results in actual behaviour change. And yet many projects still work on the assumption that human beings act rationally when it comes to changing behaviours.

Groundwork’s ‘The CLS Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation’ suggests that it is essential to identify and question such assumptions when designing a project. Behavioural change is not just a matter of presenting people with the facts. Most research into behaviour change has focused either on individual change with regard to health, or workforce change to improve organisational success. Research focusing on how to create changes in environmental behaviour indicates the importance of working with groups, rather than individuals. This is borne out by the Sustain Eden experience.

### **6c: Practices to Support Behaviour Change: Recommendations.**

Mapping the findings from academic research<sup>13</sup> over the lessons learned from the Sustain Eden projects indicates the following recommendations:

1. Focus projects on working with groups. These could be based on a shared locality (e.g. village); shared interest; or shared place of work/education.
2. Provide facilitation wherever possible. Groups need supporting over time, not just at inception.
3. Work alongside trusted partners already working with the target group, if possible integrating with their existing activities.
4. Set out clear procedures where necessary so everyone knows what’s happening and what they are doing.
5. Measure progress and provide feedback.
6. When designing a project, test your own assumptions.
7. Use a mix of strategies.

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<sup>13</sup> Tips for increasing the likelihood of Behaviour Change, University of Nebraska, cited via Verdis Environmental Blog



*Learning About Trees and the Environment - Tree Whisperers Project*

## **7: Conclusions and Key Messages:**

### **7a: Conclusions**

- The resources made available through the Sustain Eden programme have been instrumental in kick-starting a range of new activities and helping to develop and consolidate others, which would not have happened without this support.
- Through the diversity of approaches the programme engaged with a wide cross-section of people and communities, creating awareness and offering necessary brokerage, facilitation and support to make things happen on the ground.
- Supported activities enabled people, businesses and communities to implement solutions to problems and to take actions that improve economic sustainability (e.g. cheaper fuel, reduced energy consumption, community transport) whilst also having a positive influence in terms of 'greening' behaviours.
- Bringing smaller organisations and activities together under the umbrella of Sustain Eden, enabled funding to be secured that would not otherwise have been available. As a result it enabled more engagement with people, communities and businesses than would have been possible otherwise.
- The relationships developed through the partnership have laid solid foundations for continuing joint activities, and partners are now seeking ways to sustain the work to the point where lasting impact can be achieved and sustained.
- Projects which aim to change behaviour and which need to build upon extensive community development work need a considerably longer timespan than three years. They also require

the essential organisational infrastructure to be in place. This should include sufficient expertise and capacity to develop and support Action Learning by groups.

- Partnerships work most effectively where they share aspirations and work to a mutually agreed set of ground rules, enabling challenge and debate whilst being mutually supportive.
- The regular meetings of the Sustain Eden partnership provided the opportunity for considerable debate and reflection on how best to work together, how to evaluate impact, how to learn from the experiences of the programme, and how to best to approach the broad agenda of climate change.
- Maximum impact is gained by supporting integrated actions growing out of the identified needs of the community at the level of small communities of locality or community interest with clear and strong identities. This approach can create a critical mass of behaviour change within a community leading to the establishment of a new behavioural norm.
- A degree of 'paperwork' is required to support effective project management. Partners need to buy into the systems in order to provide consistency of reporting and data collection.
- A competent lead body providing admin and technical support and central programme management/co-ordination is essential if smaller organisations (especially those run by volunteers) are to engage effectively.
- Uploading online content such as information videos and teaching resources is an inexpensive way of building and maintaining a legacy from the programme.

## **7b: Key Messages for Partners and Policy Makers**

Because of the ambition of this Sustain Eden programme, the breadth of its scope and the variety of project, this evaluation review has been rather lengthy. However, for partners and policy makers wishing to create a supportive environment in which community resilience and sustainability can be engendered and supported, the messages can be summed up very simply.

6. Be prepared to fund development workers and facilitators – without them, grass-roots community work significant enough to bring about lasting change is not possible.
7. Be prepared to fund projects over a period of several years if you want to get community actions to a point where they will deliver sustainable outcomes and are mature enough to go forward on their own.
8. Be prepared to treat projects as opportunities for Action Learning and experimentation, but follow this up with a clear communication strategy to disseminate good practice.
9. There is relatively little evidence or research currently available on what really works in terms of encouraging behaviour change with either individuals or communities when it comes to environmental sustainability. It makes sense to try a range of approaches and to study what works best in different circumstances/with different groups.
10. Use a single issue – e.g. flooding – to galvanise interest and energy – but use this as a way into the wider issues.

Our final recommendation cannot, unfortunately, be delivered at the local level. It is the need for a consistent policy framework which supports individuals and communities to take action to combat climate change. Changes to Green Deal and feed-in tariffs, for example, dramatically changed the

operating environment for Sustain Eden projects. They negated much of the progress made with community energy projects since the changes made them financially unviable. The solutions to the challenges of climate change do not lie in 'quick fixes' but in long term changes to the way we live as individuals and communities – changes which need the security of a consistent policy framework if they are to be effective and take root.

**Judith Brown and John Porter**

**Programme Evaluators**

**March 2016**

## Appendix 1: Overview of Individual Projects:

Some streamlining of projects took place following the Year 1 evaluation. Management, administration, marketing were treated as core functions. Only those activities which directly engaged with beneficiaries were considered as projects. As well as those run by CAFS and PACT, already mentioned, the funding used to support articles in the local newspaper was also deemed to be in this category. In years 2 and 3, therefore, the individual projects funded, or part-funded by Sustain Eden were:

Partners and Projects	Final Sustain Eden Grant Expenditure (£)
Alston Moor Partnership	39,000
PACT – Esco/OPT4	86,000
PACT – Story Giants/Tree Whisperers	43,440
PACT – Community support and evaluation	11,000
Freegle – Food project	8,003
Cumbria Woodlands – Community Woodlands	23,600
Cumbria CVS/ACT – Community Resilience	69,075
CREA – Resource Efficiency	57,349
Herald Newspaper - communication	9,500
CAfS – Cold2Cosy Homes; Resource Efficiency; Sustainable Community Solutions; management costs	Expected out-turn: 612,058
<b>Total</b>	<b>959,980</b>

### 1: Cold to Cosy Homes:

Provided by the CAFS project manager for Domestic Energy Efficiency, this strand of work included the provision of energy advice sessions, draught-proofing workshops, and developing a pilot exemplar project to research most effective draught-proofing techniques including the actual draught-proofing of 200 homes, a target that has been nearly met by this project, despite the apparent difficulty of giving away free draught-proofing! (The target was met overall when the draught-proofing products provided by Opt4 project are factored in). It became apparent that demand for draught-proofing is linked directly to the weather – high during cold periods and dropping off during warm weather.

*“There’s definitely something about the psychology. It takes cold weather as a trigger for taking action.”*

This phenomenon has been noted across a wide range of activities associated with heating. For example British Gas reduce the working hours of their boiler maintenance teams during the summer and increase them during the winter – similarly with oil delivery companies. It is clear that there is a general tendency for people to delay actions to do with heating their homes until driven to it by the arrival of cold weather, even when it is in their interests to take action much earlier. This has implications for the timing of the delivery of such projects as Cold to Cosy homes.

With regard to assessing the best techniques and materials for draught-proofing, the project has established which the most suitable products available and which are the most cost-effective to

install and summarised these in a Draught Proofing Solutions Guide to be published on the CAFS website.

*“Doors – seals, brushes, letter-boxes and keyholes - were much easier to get results from than wooden windows which often required specialist joinery to get good [draught reduction] results.”*

It has been difficult to gauge energy savings for households because the winter of 2014/15 has been colder than the previous one and the consumption for the winter of 2014/16 has been affected by the floods, which have necessitated a high consumption of energy in order to dry out flooded homes, followed by the warmest February on record. Clearly no valid comparisons can be made between years as conditions have been too variable.

In any case, there is not always a direct relationship between energy saving installations and reduction in energy consumption:

*“People who want cosier homes may prefer to put the thermostat up when the heat isn’t just escaping through draughty doors.”*

The project developed an effective partnership with Eden Age UK. They have promoted draught-proofing and have linked it with the Winter Warmth Grant.

The project also had a strong partnership with Eden Housing, supporting draught-proofing in social housing. The experience gained from this relationship has led to work with other housing associations.

*“We probably got the work with Riverside Housing based on the work we did with Eden.”*

Regarding the legacy of the project and long-term sustainability, consultations are taking place with Eden Housing Association with a view to embedding the draught-proofing service within its Independent Living branch. CAFS is also trying to influence the local authority to take some of the services on board via the fuel poverty agenda.

A video will be made of an installer making a typical installation and this will be available via the CAFS website as a learning resource.

The other strand to this project was the provision of energy advice sessions, including advice on switching suppliers and tariffs.

The project has assisted nearly 900 people to save money on fuel bills through these sessions, of which around 30% are estimated to people living in fuel-poor households.

The project manager noticed that there had been more interest in the energy advice sessions this winter than last, possibly because the issue of switching gone higher up the political agenda and had attracted considerable media attention.

*“But there was still more interest after Christmas than in December, the same as last year. People don’t engage in the run up to Christmas. Regarding how many actually do anything or make a switch, we don’t know exactly. When people attend a session they get all fired up and say they are going to switch, but we don’t have the actual figures. We only know a switch has been made for definite if they go to one of the providers that pays a commission. We think about a quarter of the people we speak to actually switch. That’s based on the evidence from some telephone follow up work.”*



## 2: Resource Efficiency Project:

This strand of work included the organisation of Green Build Festival, the provision of Sustain Eden info points, providing a Sustain Eden presence at local shows, administering the sales of energy-saving items via the CAfS website, and the general programme communications, including providing articles for the local press, and items for the web-pages, twitter and CAfS e-news.

Impact data is not available for general awareness raising but we do know that the project has engaged with significant numbers of people, particularly through stands at local shows, via the CAfS AGM, and particularly through its well-visited website (unique 'hits' are monitored.)

Over 300 Eden residents have attended formal awareness raising events such as the Green Build Festival and the CAfS AGM. In addition the project has reached over 6,000 people through information stands and the website.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike general awareness raising, marketing and communications, the annual Green Build Festival (GBF) is a discrete project, with identifiable participants who have been consistently surveyed to establish the lasting impact of the activity.

The GBF is well-established in Cumbria as a countywide activity which involves volunteer homeowners opening their homes to registered visitors to share their experiences of installing various renewable and/or energy conservation technologies and approaches. The Sustain Eden grant covered the cost of organising and delivering the Festival in Eden in 2013, 2014 and 2015, with 2015 being the 10<sup>th</sup> year that the Festival has been run in Cumbria.

Over the three years 46 properties in Eden have been opened to the public, with householders sharing their experiences and expertise with 262 people. Participants were followed up by survey to find out if they had – or intended to- take action as a result of their involvement. From those responding to the survey we know that 23 participants either have or are definitely planning to take action.

One of the key purposes of the GBF is to inspire people and all those responding to the survey were very positive about the event and their participation may well be planting the initial seeds of an idea that will lead to action some time into the future – after all, some of the projects shared, such as building a Passivhaus, are very long-term projects. Over 80% of respondents stated that the event had 'taken them closer to action' at some time in the future.

The project manager has analysed data over the two years, and also considered it within the context of the Cumbria-wide Festival.

*"People are keen to share their achievements so there has been a good range of home projects open each year. But there has been a reduction in the number of participants, those actually visiting the properties. Maybe after ten years we have reached the people who were readily interested. Or maybe it's for other reasons. One thing that's very interesting from the feedback is that there has been a definite reduction in the number of people interested in renewable energy generation technologies, which could be to do with the changes in financial incentives. Those reporting that they had taken action had installed low-scale energy efficiency measures and specified lighting and insulation."*

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<sup>14</sup> It is not possible to analyse the figures for these 'light touch' engagements by district of residence

The GBF helps to build sustainability into individual homes, but the project manager expressed concern over the future sustainability of the Festival itself due to cuts in funding from central sources, particularly DECC.

*“There are additional costs when you’re organising an event over such a dispersed area [as Eden]. You can’t compare us with city centre schemes. Also CAfS has always wanted to run the Festival using staff. That helps to make the link with other CAfS initiatives and activities. We have been reluctant to rely on just volunteer hosts to run the events because they know about their own projects but don’t have the wider expertise that’s needed to address all the questions people have.”*

There was a demand for full energy audits and detailed technical advice on refurbishment of properties, particularly traditional Cumbrian housing stock, which could not be met within the resources of Sustain Eden. This demonstrates an appetite for change among householders if the right support can be made available.

### 3: Sustainable Community Solutions:

This project covered the work of CAfS staff supporting communities in Eden wishing to develop sustainability projects.

Over the life of the programme, the project has worked with 30 communities in 19 different wards of Eden District.

The type of work and support provided varied greatly from community to community, from energy audits on community buildings to advice on community renewable projects. Fifteen community buildings, including a village swimming pool, received advice on retro-fitting insulation, new heating systems and energy- efficient lighting. The project has supported early explorations of 5 community hydro schemes and 2 anaerobic digester schemes, plus 2 community woodlands.

The amount of support required by individual communities varied greatly from short-term advice to very long-term nurturing and ‘hand-holding’. Some communities were well-organised and in a good position to develop plans and take them forward through practical steps. Others needed community development before they were even able to think about a sustainable energy project. In this regard there was a degree of complementary overlap between the work of this project and the work of ACT. ACT had the generic community engagement expertise, but CAfS had the specific skills and knowledge required to take forward energy projects.

Because of the need for community engagement and the complex issues involved in a community energy project or community building retrofit, from technical issues to planning, much of the work on this project will not come to full fruition within the life of the CLS funding. Some continuity to take individual projects forward may be available via alternative support mechanisms – Community Energy Cumbria, Rural Cumbria Connect, Village S.O.S and the Eden District Community Fund.

This project faced the same community development issues as the Community Resilience and Emergency Planning project delivered by Cumbria CVS and ACT (see 6.5). Working with communities is not easy and it took a significant amount of time to progress from an initial idea into a delivered project.

Issues that had to be addressed before progress could be made included:



- Was the majority of the community actually on board with a project or was it just the idea of a few enthusiastic individuals? Community consultations had to take place to substantiate support for the idea and there needed to be a group in place or set up to take it forward. As with all community and voluntary services, there was a need to identify and work with a core team of activists to ensure continuity for the project following the end of Sustain Eden funding.
- Community projects - whether as simple as installing LED lighting in the village hall or as complex as setting up a community energy scheme – were dependent upon volunteers. The Sustain Eden workers had to ascertain whether the community had the capacity, the range of skills, and the energy required to drive the project through.
- For community buildings, did the committee have a maintenance plan?
- Did the group have the capacity and knowledge to raise required funding?
- Did support agencies have the capacity to sit alongside community groups for the long haul? The experience of this particular project has been that these initiatives take years rather than months.

The project officers summed up two very specific problems faced by this project.

*“The community energy situation has changed dramatically since the inception of Sustain Eden. It is much more difficult now. Fewer schemes look financially viable with the funding changes.*

*The other big issue is the overall profile of the committees running community buildings. They are often elderly and struggling to attract new volunteers. This issue is worse in very small communities which have a very small population to call upon. You notice that larger communities with a mixed demographic have been more successful in terms of actually implementing actions [than others]. Our role has often been to facilitate and support very elderly village hall committees. I mean it can be very basic. Even installing energy saving light-bulbs is a problem if there’s no-one on the committee who can go up a ladder. And they can be very frightened about exploring anything that sounds expensive. They need to be supported through the process.”*

#### **4: Alston Moor Partnership: Alston Moor Development Officer:**

The Sustain Eden grant paid for a part-time development officer working with Alston Moor Partnership. She was responsible for developing three main strands within the overall project – developing a community bus service, implementing an electric bike scheme, and supporting the development of a community hydro-electric scheme.

By the time the funding for the post came to an end in October 2015:

- There were 7 electric bikes available from community hire points and there had been 138 hires.
- A community bus service had been put in place in partnership with Cumbria County Council, generating 408 passenger journeys on two regular routes plus group hires of the bus.
- Renewable generation community consultations had been carried out, a feasibility study completed, and a Community Benefit Society set up to take a community-owned renewable energy scheme forward.

As with other Sustain Eden projects, timing has been an issue.

**Electric Bikes:** By the time the bike scheme was in place, the 2014 summer season had passed and this had an effect on numbers using the scheme, especially as the winter of 2014/15 was relatively harsh. The majority of the hires, therefore, relate only to the summer months of 2015.

The main partner in the bike scheme, the North Pennines AONB, is reviewing its entire electric bike scheme due to limited take-up and one of the community hire points, South Tynedale Railway, has pulled out and will no longer have the bikes available for hire at their centre. Despite various schemes that have been promoted in Cumbria, including by the Lake District National Park, the use of electric bikes in the UK is still well below that of other countries.

However, the cost of maintenance and insurance for the remaining hire points in Alston Moor have been covered until the end of 2016, thus providing another full year of operation. This may help to build a more critical mass of use, which would make the service sustainable into the future.

**Community Bus:** The community bus service proved extremely complicated and time-consuming to get going. The service has been set up using a Community Wheels mini-bus owned by Cumbria County Council and provided to Alston Moor on a pilot basis. This has the advantage that the Council is responsible for licencing, maintenance and insurance, but it also means that the project has had to work through local authority structures. It has also taken time to recruit and train volunteer drivers.

The timing was unfortunate in that the project took place against a backdrop of council cuts, leading to a perception that the Community Wheels was a token gesture and a general mistrust of anything with a County Council logo on it.

The County Council has covered the cost of continuing the service until the end of March 2016. The project will then be reviewed. Despite positive feedback in the original market survey of residents, take up of the scheduled routes has been low. People in rural areas have become used to not having bus services and car use has become the (necessary) default setting. Changing behaviours takes time even in the best circumstances but the bus is unable to provide a reliable, regular and an easy to use service for several reasons. To use the Community Bus, passengers need to be registered and to have a Rural Wheels card since cash cannot be taken on the bus. This means that visitors cannot use the bus. The bus also has to be booked in advance, so considerable forward planning is required in order to use it.

In the light of these difficulties, it seems unlikely that the regular routes will remain viable. However, a pool of trained volunteer drivers has been created and the bus is regularly hired by community groups, so this aspect of the service is likely to be maintained and further developed.

**Hydro-scheme:** It was always known that this project was unlikely to come to full fruition within the timescale of the Sustain Eden programme. Sustain Eden funding enabled initial work to be done in terms of community surveys, identification of potential sites and negotiation with landowners. The Project Officer sourced additional funds to carry out a full feasibility study. Renewable energy projects involve many legal, technical and financial aspects to be researched and addressed and will therefore always be longer term projects, especially where the aim is for them to be developed and owned by the community.

Further development on community renewable energy generation in Alston Moor will be taken forward by the recently established Community Benefit Scheme.

## 5: Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Action for Communities in Cumbria (ACT): Community Resilience and Emergency Planning:

The outputs originally envisioned for this project was that 6 communities at risk of flooding would have developed Emergency Plans and be better prepared to respond to and recover from emergency events.

By September 2015, there were 4 communities either working towards or considering working towards an Emergency Plan (Barton, Alston, Culgaith and Dacre). After two years of discussions, there had been no progress in Patterdale and Glenridding and the CVS felt that there was unlikely to be any action. Then came the great flood events of December 2015 (Storms Desmond, Eva and Frank) when Glenridding and many other communities in Eden suffered severe flooding. And then January brought Storm Jonas and Glenridding flooded for the fourth time.

Both Patterdale and Glenridding are now progressing towards plans and the village of Croglin is considering the best way to progress with emergency planning.

Against the background of these very live events that happened in the last days of the project and subsequently, it is very difficult to make an accurate assessment of impact. Did communities that had emergency plans respond more effectively to flooding than those which did not? Since the affected communities are still very much in recovery mode, it is too early to stand back and reflect. There is anecdotal evidence that the 'Blue Light Services' response was more effective where communities had plans(see case studies) but we have no compare and contrast data within the scope of this evaluation.

Will these communities think differently about emergency planning in future or will all their energies be invested in the immediate actions of recovery? These big issues are beyond the scope of the evaluation of this project.

With these caveats, it is still relevant to consider the lessons learned before the emergencies became realities. These are the main issues that have emerged from the work done by CVS and ACT within this project.

- Communities have relatively little interest in engaging in community emergency planning unless there is the stimulus of a crisis or as part of an overall community plan if they happen to be doing one.
- Even within neighbourhood planning there tends to be a single issue focus – for example wanting to stop or modify a new housing development.
- Communities appear to respond better to a soft approach. The word 'planning' has regulatory and statutory connotations which can get in the way of more constructive conversations.
- Awareness raising events and two-way dialogues are valuable to enable local community leaders to be much better informed about the responsibilities and capabilities of the all the agencies, and the agencies are more aware of how the communities can be responsive in time of crisis.
- It is easier to work directly with support organisations and make sure that they have the training and plans in place to assist their clients in the event of an emergency. For example,

the work undertaken by Eden Carers to ensure that there is an embedded programme of training for each of their carers ensuring that in a time of crisis they are able to roll out the individual action plans for those in their care.

At an evaluation interview in September 2015, Cumbria CVS reported that the Environment Agency was carrying out countywide flood planning which it wanted to develop into overall resilience plans but, at the same time, it did not want to raise expectations:

*“The EA has put in all the flood defence works it’s going to.”*

That situation has been dramatically altered by the record rainfall and storms of December 2015 and January 2016. The whole environment has changed. It is difficult to know what the lasting legacy of this project will be. However, one crucial outcome is the continuation of the Cumbria Resilience Network, which has been developed by the County Council using ACT’s resources through Sustain Eden and other sources. This network is now firmly embedded within the Floods Partnership which leads on Community Resilience. The Environment Agency stated that this network would not have been as far advanced and developed as it was – and thus ready to take the lead on this issue – if it had not been for the support provided by CVS and ACT made possible by Sustain Eden.

Currently all responses are flood-focused with both agencies and communities in recovery rather than resilience mode.

*“The words Climate Change haven’t been heard yet at the Resilience Network. It’s all about the floods at the moment. But another extreme weather event – like a massive snowfall for example – that would widen the focus. All flooded communities have to statutorily have a flood plan but previously this was produced by the county council who then walked away. Learning from last time [i.e. the floods of 2009], it is now expected that there will have to be much more work with communities to make them feel more resilient and better able to work together.”*

In addition to the progress made with the six communities mentioned above, the developing role of the Community Resilience Network is an important part of the legacy of this project, as are the range of resources that have been produced, for example, the guidance document ‘Community Emergency Plans – Having the Conversation’.

A lasting and on-going legacy also lies in the agencies supported and trained to implement their own emergency response plans. These include Hospice at Home, Impact Young People’s Service, Churches Together, Eden Carers, among others.

The Community Resilience Toolkit on the ACT website had been viewed over 300 times by the end of the project and will be an on-going legacy.

#### **6: Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (CREA): Business Resource Efficiency:**

The Sustain Eden funding enabled CREA to provide resource efficiency advice to small businesses, including farms. This was delivered by a mixture of group seminars and individual, on-site assessments, leading to a written report for the business.

The project finished when CREA itself closed down at the end of June 2015 after 30 years of operation due to changes in the way small business support is funded in Cumbria.

During the life of the Business Resource Efficiency scheme, CREA achieved the following outputs and outcomes:

- Small businesses receiving one-to-one support – 108
- Number of businesses accessing information via events – 73
- Percentage of participants taking energy-efficiency actions as a result – 83% (extrapolated from survey samples).

Follow up telephone surveys were carried out in February 2014, January 2015 and in June 2015.

72 businesses were contacted in the course of the first two surveys, resulting in 38 full survey interviews being completed, a 'hit rate' of 53%. Of these, only 2 respondents (5%) stated that they either had not, or did not intend to, take action to implement energy efficiency actions either in their business or their home.

There was a marked difference in both the response rate and the actual responses in the survey carried out in June 2015. 68 businesses were followed up, but it was only possible to complete 16 surveys, a greatly reduced 'hit rate' of 24%. Reasons for failure to complete varied from business being too busy to do the interview to business having closed down. Of those completing the survey, 7 (44%) stated they did not intend to take any energy efficiency actions. Reasons given were diverse and included expense, not understanding energy tariffs and business closure. We can only speculate about the reasons for this stark contrast of impact between the beginning and the end of the project. Given the project did not run for very long, it may only have been a statistical blip, or it may have been that June is a bad time of year to try to speak to businesses. On the other hand it may be that the businesses attracted to the scheme early on were those ready to engage with the idea of energy efficiency and more inclined to make the effort and investment required, whilst those recruited to the scheme later on were less motivated.

What we do know is that those businesses taking action did so in many different ways from simple actions like switching energy suppliers and installing LED lighting to more costly improvements such as installing solar panels and bio-mass boilers.

Add in something about farmers? There was a specific piece of work/report on these

### 7: Cumbria Woodlands: Community Woodlands and Burning Wood Well seminars:

Having got off to a slow start due to lack of capacity at Cumbria Woodland trust, this project has now:

- Established two sustainable community woodlands at Ullswater and Morland, generating 124 volunteer work days.
- Run 9 Burning Wood Well seminars with a total of around 100 attendees
- Established 100% commitment by attendees to take action as a result of seminars.
- Made videos on how to burn wood well and linked them to the CAfS websites as a lasting learning resource.

As with several other Sustain Eden projects, the project proved that it takes a considerable input of time and resources to develop the community groups from scratch. In addition, the project had to identify suitable woodlands and negotiate partnerships with landowners.

There are two groups, one working a small wood on the shores of Ullswater, which is owned by the National Trust (see case study in Appendix 1), and the other is working a wood in Morland which is in private ownership.

The aim with both groups is that they can eventually become self-organising and sustaining.

The Ullswater group has gelled very strongly and shows every sign of being sustainable without continued support from Cumbria Woodlands. As the woodland being worked by this group is a National Trust site, it is seen as being open to all and it attracts members from some considerable distance. Members are covered by the National Trust insurance for volunteers.

The woodland being worked by the Morland group is privately owned and the group itself is very different from the Ullswater group. The land-owners are very happy for the group to continue extracting wood but the group will probably need some continued support in order to do this. Members tend to come from working families all leading busy lives. Involvement by individuals has been more sporadic and less consistent than in the Ullswater group with no organisational structure arising naturally and informally. It is also seen very much as a village group rather than one that is open to everyone. Cumbria Woodlands is currently working with the Woodland Trust to see the Morland group included in the WT's new support project. This could include some funding to enable the group to secure insurance cover.

This project has delivered a positive legacy in terms of developing the community woodland model which Cumbria Woodlands Trust has taken forward into developments in South Lakeland. Cumbria Woodlands will continue its commitment to the establishment of community woodlands through its partnerships with the National Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Regarding the Burning Wood Well seminars, these have been well-attended and are well-rated by attendees in terms of information gained and commitment to further action. The linking of videos and tips promoting good practice have been linked to the Sustain Eden pages of the CAfS website, making them available to a wider audience.

Both elements of this project are highly replicable elsewhere and could inspire and influence other groups to establish community woodlands. However, the project has demonstrated that direct support by an officer or technical expert is essential in the early stages to help groups come together and to assist them through technical and legal aspects of the undertaking.

### 8: PACT: Tree Whisperers Project:

The primary aim of this project was to excite, inspire and educate children about one of our most wondrous yet not always visible neighbours in nature – our tree and forests – and their role in reducing climate change. Although the science of CO2 capture in trees is compelling and readily graspable by even young children, the key challenge of the programme was the removal of this subject from the core curriculum. The success of the project depended on the response from individual schools and, often times, from individual heads or teachers.

By the end of the project Tree Whisperers had:

- delivered workshops to 18 schools and over 600 individual children, using archives and trees and outdoor experiences to stimulate creative and reflective activities.
- planted over 300 trees;



- developed a suite of online learning resources available for teachers via the Tree Whisperers and CAFS websites;
- had 2,400 visits to the website between January and October 2015;
- set up 2 exhibitions linked to the project, of tree photographs and other creative work by pupils, bringing the project to a wider audience.

Forest Schools are well established, and have teachers are trained to teach climate change, but they are in the minority. The target for the project was mainly schools that were not Forest Schools. The approach had to be extremely flexible, changing its design, content and delivery in the light of curriculum changes and to meet the schools' specific needs. These included creating opportunities to run the sessions outside normal schools hours, including after school, evening and weekends. 18 of the 45 primary schools in Eden have taken part.

Because each school had its own unique programme, many different and varied outputs were achieved. For example, over 300 trees have been planted in school grounds, and sixty more in woodland around Shap. The activities and reports of individuals and of the schools taking part have all been extensively photographed, organised into a single pack and then sent back to the school for them to exhibit. Each project is also fully reported including film on the Tree Whisperers website <http://www.treewhisperers.co.uk> which is well publicised on both the PACT and CAFS websites.

Although funding to continue this particular project with the schools is likely to be difficult to find, there are two new woodland projects in Eden which will carry on the legacy. One is being taken forward by volunteers in the Woodland Trust, and the other is a travelling exhibition of the photography of Rob Fraser, who has been the 'official' photographer for the project.

The ultimate legacy of the project is the greater awareness it has created among children, which they will, hopefully, carry with them into the future and share with their friends and families. From pupil feedback there is evidence to suggest that they have learned more about trees and their important environmental roles as a result of their involvement in the project. A few quotes from feedback sheets illustrate this.

*"It's important to plant trees because it helps against global warming"*

*"I learnt that water comes up from the ground up roots into leaves and CO2 goes into the leaves to make oxygen and helps humans – so it's not like space where we can't breathe."*

*"I never knew that when you burnt wood it gives back CO2"*

*"I overlook trees and take them for granted because they are just there but I do appreciate them because they are something special."*

*"I had no idea there was any such thing as a birch tree."*

Feedback from teachers was equally positive:

*"It [the tree planting] will be perfect to talk about the cycle of the tree and the carbon cycle and they will really benefit from seeing it and having that personal experience."*

*"It was nice to see the children becoming respectful of the trees in our school grounds..."*

*"As a teacher, I also enjoyed giving children that quality time to be reflective which the children really benefitted from."*

## 9: Opt4: Community Energy Switching:

This was an ambitious project with the original purpose of establishing an Energy Supply Company (ESCo) for Eden, with a view to generating profits to be reinvested into community energy projects in Eden.

Due to the time it took to set up the enterprise, which included the difficulties of negotiating a deal with a switching partner (this was eventually established with uSwitch), this project only had one twelve-month period during which it was fully operational – May 2014 to April 2015. Outputs for this period are:

- Number of households switched by phone – 194
- Number of households switching via on-line link – 55
- Number of switches generated by co-funded officer at Eden Housing Association – 24
- Average energy bill savings per household for- £183
- Overall energy bill savings attributable to the project - £72,860
- Income earned - £3,450
- Number of households assisted considered to be in fuel poverty – 48 (this is a minimum – it was not always possible to establish fuel poverty status – it could be as high as 97)

After feasibility research and business planning, OPT4 was established as an energy-supplier switching business. Its aim was to generate income from the fees paid by the energy companies for a customer switch. The ethos of OPT4 was to provide a much more user-friendly service than the purely commercial switching agencies. Whereas the latter often just provide details of the deals that will earn a commission, OPT4 always refers people to the cheapest tariff. This approach has had an impact on the amount of commission earned. OPT4 also offered a helping hand to the customer throughout the switching process, advising how to solve other problems around energy bills and providing additional energy-saving advice.

The experience nationally is that customers are slow to switch energy suppliers. The experience with OPT4 has been no different. There is considerable inertia in customer behaviour and, even when customers are presented with a cheaper deal, they frequently do not follow this through to an actual switch.

National statistics suggest that 15% of customers do switch, but this figure includes internal switching to alternative tariffs with the same provider, so the actual percentage switching providers is significantly lower. Switching agencies earn income from the bonus paid by the suppliers for each successful switch. Generation of sufficient income to cover costs, let alone make a profit, is dependent upon handling huge volumes.

The OPT4 service was much more user-friendly than that offered by the big switching sites. Because it took referrals from gateway organisations, many of its clients were 'harder-reach people' in fuel debt who required significant amounts of time to be spent with them. As a result, OPT4 averaged only two calls an hour.

The switching market is highly competitive with national, established switching facilities handling huge volumes of business. These have vastly greater marketing budgets than was available to OPT4. It proved very difficult for a small, community-facing organisation to break into this market with sufficient volumes to generate a sustainable income from commissions.



Despite significant efforts by PACT and the OPT4 team, the service cost more to run than it could generate in income. Therefore the OPT4 Board took the decision to close the project in April 2015.

The service provided to customers has been of high quality and has been relatively successful in terms of reaching hard-to-reach groups such as older people and people with disabilities. It calculates that it has brokered switches for people totalling around £73,000.

However, offering a user-friendly hand-holding service is costly in terms of staff time and such costs cannot be covered by the limited income being earned via switching commissions. In order to continue the project would have needed to generate additional grant income and staff time would have become consumed with this activity instead of servicing customers.

There is evidence from other projects elsewhere in the country that community-driven switching activities are failing to be cost-effective. For example the collective switching project operated by South Lakes District Council could not be sustained because the operating costs were too high. Elsewhere, the Bristol Centre for Sustainable Energy reviewed its impact and concluded that the savings generated were no better than those that could be generated using existing comparison sites. The OPT4 project does appear to have generated better outcomes in terms of energy costs savings per client than the big operators in the field, partly because it supported people who would not use on-line comparison sites. However, it could only do so at an unsustainable cost.

Despite considerable efforts by the government to encourage people to switch energy suppliers, consumer inertia and/or fear of changing remains an issue. The in-depth approach of the OPT4 model provides evidence for some of the reasons behind this.

- Older people and people with certain disabilities are reluctant or unable to access digital switching sites;
- People may lack the confidence to work their way through options;
- People may fear that switching suppliers will lead to missed or wrongly calculated bills – a particular concern for households already in fuel debt;

The project also found that people only thought about switching when their energy bills were at their highest – i.e. in the colder months of the year. This pattern of behaviour has also been experienced by the Cold to Cosy Homes project run by CAFS.

#### **10: Penrith and Eden Freegle: Growing Your Own: Total Grant: £10,000**

The small grant from Sustain Eden has enabled Penrith and Eden Freegle to establish a gardening group on its website. This helps people to set up exchanges of plants, seeds and surplus produce with the aim of encouraging people to grow more of their own food. It was found that people needed to learn gardening skills so a programme of skill-sharing was run to visit edible gardens (VEG).

- 678 users have successfully exchanged 449 items in the Freegle Grow Your Own category, enabling exchanges of seeds, tools etc. so that more people can grow their own food.
- Over 1,000 people have stopped at Grow Your Own Stalls, with 396 attending events such as seed swaps.
- Included in the above figure are 84 people have attended VEG (Visiting Edible Garden) events, with approx. 40% stating that they intend to change their behaviour as a result (e.g.

grow more of their own food). Of those who did not plan to change their behaviour the usual reason was that they were already growing fruit and veg.

- 17 people have hosted Grow Your Own training sessions, sharing their knowledge and expertise.

The Freegle project manager has been diligent in collecting feedback from events, including carrying out follow-up interviews with a sample of people attending VEG events. The responses received are the basis for the Freegle case studies in Appendix 2.

With a view to longer term sustainability, Eden Freegle is part of the national Freegle movement run by volunteers. The gardening aspect of the project has since been replicated in 11 other areas of the country so far. There is sufficient usage to keep the gardening section going if a small amount of funding can be found to organise events such as the VEG visits and for publicity.

As a further legacy, the project encouraged the development of a Freegle mobile phone app. Following an introduction by CAFS, Cumbria County Council's Waste Prevention team also contributed £1k towards the app development, which went live in 2015 and had been downloaded over 19,000 times by the end of February 2016.

Freegle has received Test and Stretch consultancy support through Groundwork's Project Dirt, and it is seeking to secure funding at a national level for a development officer to support the establishment of Freegle groups in localities across the country.

## Appendix 2: Case Studies:

### Case Study 1: Cumbria Woodlands Community Woodlands Project

Using the grant from Sustain Eden, Cumbria Woodlands have developed two community woodland projects. The aim of these projects is to facilitate access to free wood-fuel for local communities. This is achieved by community groups working with the owner of a small woodland, coppicing and carrying out other maintenance jobs, in return getting to keep the fruits of their labour in the form of free wood.

The projects took some time to get established as suitable woodlands had to be identified and negotiations had to take place with the owners. Once this had been done further work was carried out with communities to establish informal groups of volunteers. Two groups have been established in Eden. One is working on a privately-owned woodland near the village of Morland. The other is a site owned by the National Trust on the shores of Ullswater.

“It’s great from the point of view of the National Trust because we are dependent on volunteer labour. What we hope to do here is restore this site to wooded pastureland. We’ve needed the involvement of Cumbria Woodlands to get the group going and to organise the meets. Hopefully the group will consolidate and someone will take on the co-ordination role, which we haven’t got the time to do. All other aspects, like insurance and so on, we can cover by signing people up as National Trust volunteers.”

On a very wet and windy February day in Glenridding, seven volunteers turned up for a work meet.

“We’re here for the free wood. It’s great to get outside and get the exercise, but it’s getting the wood which is why we’ve come [as a family]. Having the support is useful, like access to better tools than we have ourselves, and we hope to get to a Burning Wood Well workshop when we can.”

“I have to admit it was the prospect of free fuel that attracted me, and I dragged my husband along as well. But we are really enjoying it. We both like being outdoors anyway and this is a great way to be outdoors, doing something in enjoyable company. But it was the idea of the free wood that hooked us in.”

“We’re new to the area and we thought this would be a good way to meet people and to get involved in the community and get some exercise at the same time.”

“I like the fact that it’s informal, because I’m not interested in committees and having to have constitutions and all that. Mind you, I can see that we might have to do that eventually. Ben [the National Trust officer] reckons there’s enough work here for two to three years but after that we might want to move to new sites and I think once you start expanding then you have to think about having a more formal structure. What I hope is that we’ll be a really strong group by then so someone will step forward to take on those roles.”

Clearly there is sufficient enthusiasm to maintain the Ullswater group, especially as engagement is a long term commitment – trees are cut in the dormant season and it is not until the summer that work starts on extraction, so it is some time before people will obtain their free fuel.

With insurance and health and safety issues covered by the National Trust, there is every reason to believe that this project is sustainable after the grant has ceased as long as group is able to take on the tasks of organising dates for meets.

The project is an illustration of how people can be 'hooked in' to an activity by the prospect of free fuel, which then leads on to a wide range of other benefits, including the health benefits of working outdoors, being part of a community, and contributing to the restoration of landscape and habitat.

There are more complicated long term issues to be worked out with the Morland project where the land is privately owned and it remains to be seen how these will work out over the next months. However, it has been a valuable exercise to test different models as replicability will require flexibility to different circumstances. Cumbria Woodlands is a Cumbria-wide organisation and is taking lessons learned from the Sustain Eden programme and applying them to community woodland developments in other areas of the county.

### **Case Study 2: Freegle VEG Visits:**

In December 2014, we followed up with those who had attended the Visiting Edible Gardens (VEG) events earlier in the year. Our aim was to evaluate the impact of the VEG events several months on, by asking participants about their plans for growing fruit and veg next year. We conducted brief interviews by phone and email. Below are the responses we received.

#### **Shirley Johns – from Brough**

Shirley attended the VEG event at Brough in June 2014. She was new to growing veg, and as a result of the event she now plans to grow a selection of veg in 2015, including parsnips, leeks, beans and peas, on a small scale. Shirley has a large lawn and intends to cultivate a small portion of it. She came away from the VEG event with some extra knowledge and said it also gave her encouragement. Shirley commented: "It was good to be able to ask the other growers how they did this or that."

#### **The Slaters – from Kendal**

Mrs Slater attended the Brough VEG event in June 2014. This was the first time she had ever been to an event like VEG, although she does attend a lot of general open gardens with her husband. Both were already keen fruit and veg growers, with their own allotment. Mrs Slater commented that they'd both been introduced to growing by their parents when they were children, and she added that this was the case for most of the experienced growers she knows. She suggested that the Grow Your Own project could try to engage children in growing – for example, by working with schools.

#### **Ian Naylor – from Armathwaite**

Ian attended the Glassonby VEG day in July 2014. He's an experienced grower already but found the event very useful as he picked up different techniques to try with the food he currently grows. Ian felt Freegle should run more VEG events in 2015.

#### **Jess Owen**

Jess attended the Penrith VEG event in August 2014. She felt the event did inspire her to grow more. She's not in a position to grow veg currently due to her living arrangements but she does plan to try as soon as she has her own space. Jess felt it would have been very useful for the VEG events to have

a hands-on element, where attendees could be shown how to do a task related to growing, as well as viewing the garden.

### **Jan Thompson – Nenthead**

Jan came to the Leadgate event near Alston in July 2014. She was already growing fruit and veg but now plans to grow more. Since the event, she has begun prepping beds with compost in readiness for springtime. Jan found it inspiring to see another gardener's way of adapting to the climate and other challenges of growing food in her area. Jan has polytunnels, having more or less abandoned growing outside due to her location. She's interested in expanding the range of food she grows, such as squashes and more beans. One tip Jan learnt at the VEG event was raising beds off the ground in containers and she's now trying this technique using old water tanks and other large containers. "It has worked really well as we have mice and voles eating produce sometimes, but growing off the ground has solved that problem. Amazing. We have celery, carrots, lettuce, rocket, purslane and other greenery growing in the tanks. They are a good height, so no bending down to weed."

Jan felt that gardening and growing food should be part of the school curriculum. "People need to know how easy it is to grow food, even if only some rocket and salad leaves if you lack in space. If your parents don't garden then this useful talent maybe doesn't get passed on. I was lucky. My dad grew most of our veg when I was growing up. We had lots of lovely veg from the garden and produce stored through the winter."

### **Dan Morris**

Dan was at the VEG event in Penrith in August 2014. He said: "The event definitely inspired me to grow food! I think I will try and start to grow some produce in the next spring. I'm thinking of growing some beans to start off with, maybe some other easy introductory veg." Dan noted that the event was in a very large garden and said: "I think events that were targeted at showing people how to grow in small spaces (inside homes or in terrace gardens, for example) could be great for a lot of people."

### **Case Study: Community Emergency Planning**

Eamont Bridge is a community that already had a community flood plan in place and it was put to the test in the severe floods of December 2015. The experience of the community provides an excellent example of how having a plan in place helped reduce the impact of the flooding and speeded up the emergency response.

"We had a plan that covered everything right up to the point of flooding.....we have small groups and as soon as we get the flood alert they notify me [Chair of Parish Council] of any properties that are empty because people are away or whatever. They also let me know of anyone who may need extra assistance, like invalids. I pass on the full list to the rescue services so they can prioritise. If they know that a property is unoccupied they don't have to waste time battering the door down to rescue people who aren't there. The thing with a plan is that you've got a basic theme which you follow – everyone knows what needs to be done. It just works automatically."

Of course, the impact of severe flooding doesn't stop once the waters go down. There is a long period of recovery.



“Our plan took us up to the flooding, but then there is the recovery. What do you do next? You need a robust process and we need to write this into our plan. We watched what the recovery services did and learned from them. Other things we learned too. One problem was that we ran out of sand. We need to make sure we have twice as much for next time.”

That there will be a next time seems to be accepted as a fact of life in Eamont Bridge.

“This was the third time for most people so everyone has their own emergency plan for protecting their own properties. The community plan is for the village as a whole. Once we’ve all recovered, once all the building and refurbishment is complete, the flood group will sit down to update and revise the community plan. It worked well, but we need to write recovery into it as well.”

