

**SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
FORUM**



**CHURCHES
TOGETHER
in CUMBRIA**

June 2009

Church and Community in Cumbria

The Social Responsibility Forum of Churches Together in Cumbria seeks to encourage and facilitate the involvement of Christians and local churches throughout our county as widely as possible in all aspects of community life.

There are already scores of wonderful examples around Cumbria of this kind of engagement.

The purpose of this leaflet is to highlight a few current opportunities and challenges that Christians and churches in Cumbria might want to consider with regard to involvement in our communities.

Local Strategic Partnerships: a chance to have your say; a need for local talent and experience

Local strategic partnerships (LSPs) bring together public, private and third sector (faith/voluntary/community) representatives to work together on policy direction for each local area. There are 5 LSPs in Cumbria: Carlisle, Eden, Furness, South Lakeland and West Cumbria. There is also a county-wide Cumbria Strategic Partnership.

There is at least one faith community representative on each strategic partnership, usually appointed by Churches Together locally or at county level. Your faith community representative would be pleased to receive your input. If you are involved with local community groups, such as neighbourhood forums, your faith representative on the LSP would especially welcome your help in linking your local issues with discussions of policy across the district as a whole. Contact details for your faith community representative can be obtained from Helen Boothroyd on 01768 550045 or found at:
www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/local_strategic_partnerships.htm

As well as public and third sector representatives, LSPs need the talent and experience of private sector personnel with a concern and commitment for their local community. Are you a Christian business person who might be able to give your time and expertise to the community by acting in an advisory capacity to your LSP, or even through membership of it? If so, please contact the faith community representative for your LSP who will help and advise on ways you might get involved.

Tackling Climate Change: an opportunity for the churches to lead by example

Climate change is the single most serious issue facing our world today. We are used to saying that 'they' (governments, companies, etc) need to do something about the pressing problems of our time, and this is certainly true of climate change, but unlike many other issues this is one where none of us can absolve ourselves of responsibility. The bad news is that every one of us is damaging God's earth and threatening the future of humanity through our carbon footprint. The good news is that every one of us can also make lifestyle choices that will significantly reduce our carbon footprint, learning to become more responsible stewards of the creation God has entrusted to us.

It is not just as individuals that we can take action but together as churches, for example through the Eco-Congregation programme <http://ew.ecocongregation.org>. or the North West initiative Faiths4Change www.faiths4change.org.uk which offers a free sustainability audit to any church in Cumbria.

Lots of ideas, resources and inspiring stories to help churches do this are found at Churches Together in Cumbria's Acting on Climate Change web pages:
www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/ccacc

These web pages also include up to date information about actions that can be taken to encourage our Government and other world leaders to commit to the urgent and radical action that is necessary to address climate change, for example in the lead up to and aftermath of the crucial International Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009.

The main denominations in Cumbria jointly issued an attractive full colour leaflet in 2008, ***God, Nature and Climate Change***, setting out why Christians should be concerned and take action about climate change and how we might do so. Copies of this leaflet can be obtained from Helen Boothroyd (01768 550045 or hbctic@tiscali.co.uk) or downloaded from: www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/ccacc/index.html

It makes sense for churches to work with our wider communities and public bodies to tackle climate change together. The church-led Sustainable Communities project was an excellent example of this:

www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/sustainable_project.htm

Communities across Cumbria continue to work in this way, for example Go Green Ambleside:

www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/ccacc/Stories.html

The Church also supports the work of public bodies to tackle climate change, particularly through our involvement with the strategic partnerships, for example the Climate Change Strategy for Cumbria:

www.cumbriastrategicpartnership.org.uk/Climate_Change/climatechange.asp
and the Energy Coast: www.britainsenergycoast.com

**Churches Trust for Cumbria:
helping to keep churches
at the heart of community activity**

Right across Cumbria the church has traditionally been at the heart of the local community.

The Churches Trust for Cumbria was established in 2008 to help churches retain this place at the hub of their community through greater use of their buildings for appropriate community activities.

The Churches Trust for Cumbria's website provides information about a range of issues including accessing funding, linking with appropriate partner organisations in the community, recruiting new volunteers and welcoming pilgrims, visitors and tourists: www.ctfc.org.uk

In addition the staff can provide advice and support with developing a long term vision for the use of church premises and assist with business planning.

Contact co-directors Gina Dowding and Jon Sear for an informal chat if you are concerned about the financial future of your church or fabric of the building and would be open to looking creatively at increasing its community use:

ginadowding@ctfc.org.uk

07501 469374

jonsear@ctfc.org.uk

07501 469373

Embracing Change

Sometimes whether we have lived a long time in a place or moved there recently we want things to remain exactly as they are. The prospect of change makes us feel uncomfortable. We might be worried about the effect of proposed changes on our view. We might be concerned about the value of our house or who our neighbours will be in the future.

Sometimes Christians have opposed change in our communities, for example the development of affordable housing, the building of a hostel for vulnerable people or a new source of employment, because of fears about its impact on us.

But Christianity should not be NIMBY!¹ Before we oppose change Christians should always ask ourselves whether such opposition is justified in the light of our Gospel; a Gospel which tells us to love our neighbours as ourselves and leads us to build communities together with others rather than live in isolation from the neighbours God gives us.

How can we live out the teaching of our Saviour Jesus through the stance that we take on developments within our local communities in Cumbria in the 21st Century?

¹ 'Not in my back yard'

*Issued jointly by:
The Social Responsibility Forum of
Churches Together in Cumbria
and
The church representatives on
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Churches Together in Cumbria website:

www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk