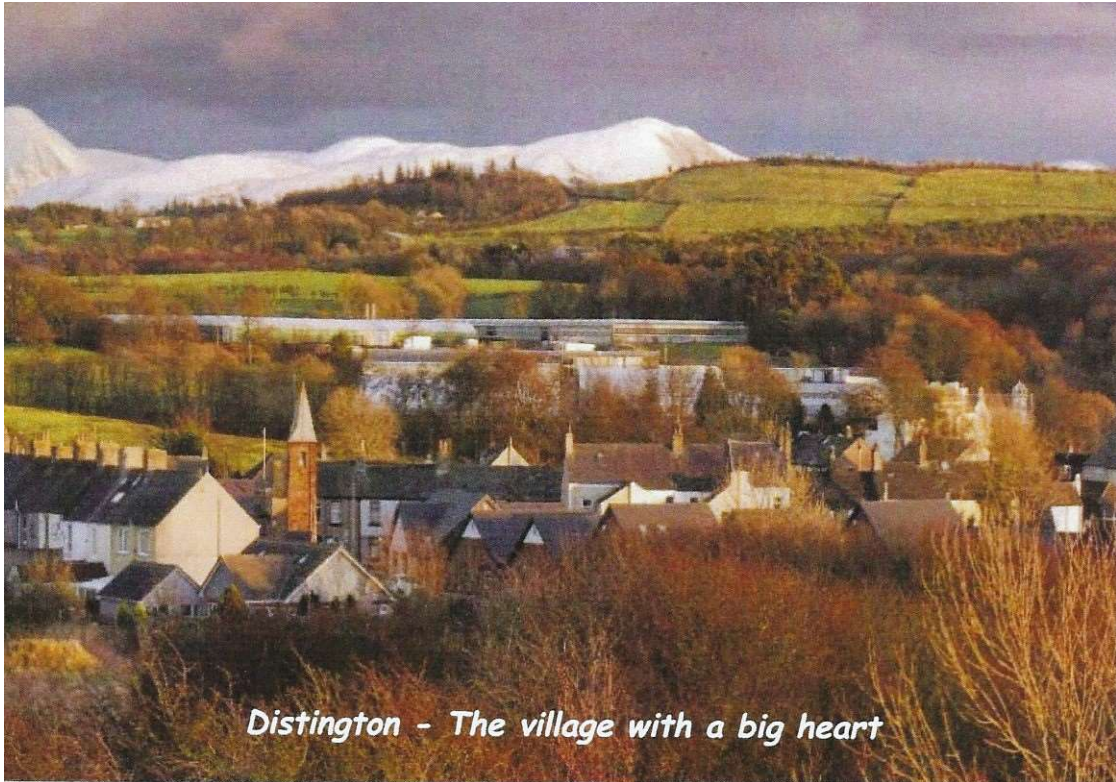




Distington Big Local Annual Report April 2021



Distington - The village with a big heart

Agenda

Welcome and Chair's Report – Rhoda Robinson

Treasurer's Report – Julia Powley

Annual Report – Ingrid Morris

Architects Update on Housing Scheme – HLP

Housing 21 Introduction - H21

Local Trust Update – Pete Duncan

Questions From the Public

Election of New Board Member

Board Members 2019 – April 2021

Rhoda Robinson – Chair
Norma Pritt – Vice Chair
Rev Julia Powley – Treasurer
Alison Boyd
Josephine Greggain
Karen Hodgson
Sue Hunter
Annette Whitehead

Non Voting Members

Elaine Ismay, Jean Skelly, Paula Speight, Joy Jones
(April 2021 Jean Skelly and Paula Speight resigned from the board)

Sub Groups

Young People & Families

Cole Askew
Faith Askew
Helen Askew
Margaret Hower
Karen Hodgson
Andrea Martin
Nathan Martin
Christine Pattinson
Amanda Postlethwaite
Rev Julia Powley
Jean Skelly
Julie Stewart

Residents Wellbeing & Community

Alison Boyd
Josephine Greggain
Margaret Hilldrop
Rhana Horricks
Joy Jones
Norma Pritt
Rhoda Robinson
Annette Whitehead

Land Development

Sue Hunter - Chair
Alison Boyd
Karen Hodgson
Rev Julia Powley
Norma Pritt
Rhoda Robinson

Staff

Ingrid Morris – Project Manager
Vic Askew – Project Assistant
Lindsay Bodman – Project Assistant (maternity cover, no longer employed)
Ronnie Hower – Village Maintenance

Local Trust Advisor

Pete Duncan

Introduction

Big Local is a community led project funded by lottery money.

We are one of 150 Big Locals in England. Distington Big Local started in 2014 and has been delivering projects for around 6 years now.

Including interest earned, we will receive just under £1.2million (£1,199,500) of Local Trust funding when this programme comes to an end.

The funding is managed by Local Trust. We submit plans to Local Trust on how we would like to spend the money. Once these plans are agreed, Local Trust release the funding to us in stages. Last year we had our final plan agreed and Local Trust funding will come to an end for Distington at the end of March 2023.

We also get funding from other sources. Without this match funding some of our work would not have been possible.

Other funders are : Copeland Community Fund, Copeland Borough Council (Community Led Housing fund), National Community Land Trust Network, Cumbria Community Foundation, Homes England and Active Cumbria

Chair's Report

Hello everyone and welcome to our Annual General Meeting.

I would like to start by thanking our amazing staff, Ingrid our Project Manager, Vic our Project Assistant and Ronnie who is our Village Maintenance Worker. They have all worked extremely hard this last year under very difficult circumstances. Working from home has had its challenges, and Zoom meetings were difficult at first, but have now become quite normal.

I would like to thank all the Board and Sub Group Members for all their hard work, they have dedicated many hours of their time to the various projects. This has been a sustained voluntary effort by all members over a very long period of time, thank you!

The Big Local program has been working since 2014 and will finish in 2 years' time. Many community groups and local organisations have been supported by Distington Big Local through funding, administrative support and project delivery, this will continue until the end of March 2023.

Like everyone we have been affected by the pandemic, we quickly had to adapt to on line meetings and find a way to help support Distington's residents during these difficult times. The community's response in helping one another has been fantastic. People have rallied, fund raised and looked out for one another. This is a real testament to the people of Distington and shows what a tight knit community we are. Many of our projects have been put on hold due to the pandemic, hopefully for not too much longer. The housing development however has been moving forward, all be it slowly. Our first planning application was submitted in March 2020, unfortunately Covid 19 caused delays. Working together with our partner housing associations and to address concerns raised by the community, some changes were made to the design of the scheme and a new planning application was submitted in March 2021. At the same time the previous application was withdrawn. The second application is free of charge. Unfortunately, on Wednesday 7th March 2021 the Whitehaven News printed an article stating that our new application had been withdrawn. This is not true, we are now waiting for the planner's decision, and continue to work hard to get this fantastic social housing scheme built for the benefit of our village.

Minutes of the meeting from October 2019's AGM- can these be passed as a true record.

I will now hand you over to our Treasurer Rev Julia Powley

Treasurer's Report

For the year to year to 31 March 2020. Our income comes from Big Local with little bits from other grants and from the revenue generated by Ronnie in his grass cutting and maintenance work.

For 2020:

Village maintenance money	£10,480	(against costs of £29,383)
Big Local Grant	£177,289	

The way in which the project has worked since the beginning is that we submit spending plans, all of which have been put together after consultation with the community, and we then account for our spending against those plans every six months. The money is given to us as we need it, and not in one big chunk.

Regarding expenditure, the biggest recipients of money from us in the year were

The Distington CASC	£28,702
The Club for Young People	£16,000
The Community Centre	£10,000
The Citizens Advice Project	£10,152

In addition, money was spent on paying Ingrid and Vic, as well as Lindsay in that year, and running an office

£49,231

There was a separate amount from Local Trust for the land development, which has been used for paying fees in order to get the land development to its current position.

There is not much time left on the Big Local project, which is set up to run for ten years or when the money is spent. We are now in our final plan, so our income has been allocated up to the end of the project, with money set aside towards a play park, the Club for Young People, and the Community Centre in particular.

Project Manager's Annual Report

What a year this has been, due to Covid 19 some of our regular group activity has had to stop. Our staff adapted very quickly to home working and volunteers got to grips with online meetings. Distington's fantastic community spirit shone through as groups and individuals rallied to support those in need during the pandemic. DBL provided **emergency funding** to Friends not Foe and Distington Action Against Hunger. We also provided funding for, and worked with, local food providers to ensure none of our children would go hungry during the autumn half term holidays.

Volunteers on the Fareshare project known as **Distington Action Against Hunger** have worked incredibly hard during the pandemic. During the first lockdown they supplied in the region of 95 food bags per week to local residents. Super markets donated additional food which often needed collecting late in the evening to then be sorted, bagged up and delivered. The volunteers have grown from strength to strength, sourcing food, shopping for additional food, not to mention fund raising to ensure that no one in our community goes hungry. DBL secured an £800 grant from Cumbria Community Foundation for the project. The work and hours you have put in is very impressive and we would like to thank you on behalf of the whole community. DBL continues to support the group but they have recently taken on all of the administrative tasks involved in the running of the project.

Friends not Foe was set up by Distington ARL. The lads rallied to support the community ensuring vital prescriptions & supplies were delivered to those shielding, self isolating and living on their own. Funding was raised, Chippy Teas delivered, (subsidised by Anthony's Chippy) They provided vouchers to staff at Distington Surgery in thanks for all their hard work during the pandemic.. **DBL nominated them for the Cumbria Sports Award** and they won COMMUNITY CLUB OR GROUP OF THE YEAR – Quality Local Leadership -**for providing exceptional support to their local communities during the pandemic.**

Both groups worked hard to ensure vulnerable people did not feel isolated and alone, delivering vital supplies but just as importantly providing a friendly face, checking up on people during these difficult times. It's a real privilege to work with such a strong, tight knit community

Positive Postcards – DBL felt this was a way to help support vulnerable residents living on their own during the pandemic. A local amateur photographer provided a wonderful photo of our village which we had made into postcards. Messages of encouragement were written and several batches were sent out during the last year, helping people to feel less lonely during this isolating time.

CASC funding for Rugby Club Building Refurbishment– DBL awarded funding to CASC to help with their renovation of the rugby club building. This much needed upgrade has greatly improved the facilities in Distington with a modern bar and function room.

Citizens Advice Outreach to Distington was funded for approximately 5 years until March 2020. Weekly 3 hour outreach sessions were held in Distington for local residents, lots of good information was distributed over the years and at a time when Universal Credit was rolled out in the area, which affected many on benefits. Many of our residents gained new skills from these sessions. Citizens Advice, as well as Whitehaven and Egremont Credit Union, also helped to support the Fareshare project (now Distington Action Against Hunger) in Distington. Free Citizen's Advice in our area is still available in Whitehaven and Workington (Covid 19 restrictions permitting) and online.

Christmas Shopping Trip to the Metro Centre, Newcastle – Back in November 2019 DBL arranged a shopping trip for residents providing subsidised transport to the Metro Centre.

Christmas Community Event – In 2019 we had our usual Christmas event which included a light switch on gathering and visit from Santa. Although in 2020 we could not have the same type of event as in previous years, we still had a village Christmas Tree, stockings for young children and a decorated window / front of house competition. Thanks go to Home Group from whom we received funding for the tree and as ever we had lots of support from volunteers to make this project happen.

Community Chest & Transport Grants – Due to the pandemic, some of the local community groups who normally access these grants have had to put things on hold but other groups active during the pandemic have received funding. DBL intend to continue providing these community grants until the end of Programme in March 2023.

Community Chest grants received: West House Distington, Evergreens, Pat's Coffee and Crack Club, Distington OAP Reunion Group, Distington Action Against Hunger, Distington ARL Friends not Foe, Distington in Bloom.

Transport Grants were received : Distington Action Against Hunger and Distington OAP Reunion Group.

Distington Club for Young People will continue to receive funding as they have done since the start of DBL in 2014. The funding will be gradually reduced over the remaining years to help the club reduce dependency on our funding.

Over 60's Exercise Class – DBL were successful in getting Active Cumbria funding for a class run by local fitness instructor Tina Spedding. Sessions will resume again in the community centre once Covid restrictions allow.

Covid 19 Memory competition – Children submitted drawings and photos of what life was like for them during lockdown. This helped youngsters to reflect on the impact of the pandemic and how life had changed for them. First, second and third cash prizes were awarded.

Covid 19 Time Capsule -We are working with local residents and groups, Distington Community School, Distington Surgery and Distington Club for Young People. Items depicting life during the pandemic will be buried in a time capsule in the village, at a location yet to be decided.

Funding for School Sensory Room – Due to the pandemic and subsequent lock downs, children's mental health and well being has been severely affected. In order to support their pupils, the school are building a multi purpose sensory / nurture room specifically designed to help children with poor mental health as well as children with special educational needs. DBL has helped to fund this project.

Our **Village Maintenance** project continues to help keep Distington looking welcoming and tidy. This includes several grass cutting contracts with local organisations. Following appropriate safety guidelines, DBL has been able to continue providing subsidised gardening services for residents during the pandemic. Any income received from village maintenance work gets put back into the community to support community projects.

Land Development – Since 2016 we have been hard at work on our land development plans for social housing for over 55 year old's in the village. On 30th October 2019 we were awarded the **Jeff Brown Innovation Award** by Action with Communities in Cumbria. The award was for our community led work on the housing scheme. You can visit Action with Communities in Cumbria website to see a case study of our project.

The initial outlay to buy the land was approximately £82,000.

We were successful in receiving a large amount of funding from different organisations for our land development.

Copeland Community Fund - £10,440

Copeland Borough Council's Community Led Housing Fund - £27,610

Homes England Funding- £157,493

National Community Land Trust - approximately £4,000 in kind funding

Distington Big Local funding – 55,440

Total £254,983

About 22% of the funding spent on Land Development is from Distington Big Local (Local Trust)

(We are hoping to get in the region of £37,820 more from Copeland Borough Council)

Following several years of working with technical advisors, lawyers, solicitors, architects and surveyors, we were ready to put in for a full planning application in March 2020. Like with so many things, Covid 19 slowed down progress on this project.

Some objections were raised during the 1st planning submission which have been addressed by the architects through a change in design. Housing 21 have also had an input in design changes to accommodate their requirements for the scheme. They are hoping to build and manage the 35 unit apartment block and will raise the funding to build and then manage the scheme. We are exploring options with other housing associations to develop the 11 bungalows on the site. Two extra bungalows were added to the scheme when the number of apartments were reduced from 45 to 35. One of the challenges of the scheme is making it financially viable which is difficult to achieve in an area where rental income is low.

We are very proud of the dementia friendly, state of the art design that will bring up to date, modern, future proof housing to the heart of Distington. It is worth noting that Homes England have indicated they are willing to fund the higher grant rate per unit that will be needed to get this innovative, dementia friendly scheme built.

We were fortunate to be gifted the access road to the land by the previous owner, but on the condition that it only be used for a housing development for people over the age of 55, which means the access road is protected by a covenant.

Our second planning application was submitted on 19 March 2021 and it is hoped that building work will start on site in autumn 2021.

It is worth noting that community consultation has been ongoing and at the heart of this project from when we were first approached by a resident to buy the land for the village.

This project started in 2016 with a public meeting to ask if the community wanted DBL to buy the land. Residents decided this is what they wanted. DBL were successful in buying the land. A Community Consultation and Feasibility Study were carried out by community specialists Architect and Designers **Halsall Lloyd Partnership**, who have many years experience in this field. A local housing needs survey was also carried out. The community was consulted through door to door chats with resident and organisations immediately surrounding the land, other residents were encouraged to fill in a questionnaire on how the land should be used for the benefit of the village. Many things were suggested for the site and housing came out as the priority. This followed a community event which included a fair ground ride, climbing wall, face painting and food laid on. Plans and a model were displayed by the architects to show how a development might look. 79% of people who attended the event and completed a questionnaire said they wanted housing for elderly people on the land. The questionnaire was completed by fifty nine people. This was followed by another Housing Need Survey which went out to all Distington residents and residents of surrounding parishes. The results showed a strong desire for a housing scheme in the village. We held another public consultation event for residents explaining the updated scheme with the architects on hand to answer any questions. Throughout the public consultation we had much positive feedback for this project.

There are some in the village who have commented negatively about the scheme on social media. They have had many opportunities to engage with Big Local. Volunteers and staff have always been willing to discuss the project with residents and take any concerns on board. There will always be people who object to some schemes but DBL is resident led and have gone with what the majority of residents want.

The homes will be built and managed on a not for profit basis for the benefit of the community. The lettings policies will give priority to local residents. The scheme is incredibly well designed and will be an asset to the village enabling residents to live in their community in modern, age appropriate housing which incorporates design for dementia and wheel chair accessibility. This will have a positive knock on effects for

the local community and economy. It is also highly likely that the development will increase the value of properties immediately surrounding the currently derelict site.

Play Park – From the start residents have been keen for a new play park in the village. Funding has been set aside to support this project. The Young People & Families group have been working hard on this and have decided on a castle theme for the park. We are hoping that the parcel of land on Hinnings Road can be gifted by Copeland Borough Council to Distington Parish Council. We are working in partnership with the Parish Council who will take on the ownership and maintenance of the play park.

New Company Structure –In 2016 DBL were registered as a company limited by guarantee. However for the land development project we needed to change our company structure to align with a community land trust. In January 2021 we converted to a Community Benefit Society known as **Distington Community Trust**. We still go under the name of Distington Big Local.

DBL's final plan & budget for Local Trust funding was submitted and approved in June 2020 – The DBL programme is set to finish at the end of March 2023 when all our Local Trust funding comes to an end. Distington Community Trust will remain as owner of the land that the housing scheme is built on.

Legacy – DBL board members having been thinking about what legacy will be left for Distington village and it's residents once this Big Local programme has come to an end.

The main legacies will be:

- Improved Community Building
- Modern state of the art housing scheme that will last in perpetuity
- A new play park
- Many residents will have learnt new skills and grown in confidence
- Distington Community Trust has been set up

The volunteers of DBL have put in countless hours of their time to enable these projects to be delivered for the benefit of the village.

They do this on a completely voluntary basis and get nothing in return. Please note, they do not in any way gain financially from their involvement with DBL.

Without them, none of this would have been possible.

Many thanks to them for all their hard work and commitment to making this village a better place to live in.

Local Trust | Big Local

Thanks also to all our funders and partner organisations

