



INTRODUCTION

Alnwick Community Trust has been subject to several significant changes to the board of trustees over the last twelve months. As noted in last year's report, a major change has been the resignation of Linda Wood-Mitchell as Chair. This has been accompanied by a number of trustee changes generally occurring either through ill health, changed family priorities or relocation. In mid-August 2024, many major changes were made to trustees including the key roles, currently, there are ten trustees with two unfulfilled vacancies. The present board wishes to use this opportunity to thank the tireless and significant contributions made to the establishment of and continued success of the Charity on the part of the departing trustees. The current Chair would like to make special mention of the departing Chair whom as a force of nature will be a hard act to follow.

This report sets out the purpose, goals, opportunities, challenges, and achievements of Alnwick Community Trusts

This report provides a framework to illustrate the projects undertaken by Alnwick Community Trust, during its third year as a Registered Charity. This includes changes that have occurred and summarizes plans for new or potential projects in the next twelve months.

BACKGROUND

Alnwick Community Trust is a registered Charity No. 1197210 formed following a mutual development of purpose between two groups: Loving Alnwick and Investing in Alnwick.

Loving Alnwick started in 2018 as a small community group with a handful of volunteers working on various environmental and social community projects. Through, connecting with additional private and public organisations, for example, Town and County Councils, the Alnwick Garden, Northumberland Estates, and the Chamber of Trade. It was agreed by the Board of Directors, in 2019, for 'Loving Alnwick' to become 'Investing in Alnwick' a not-for-profit company. Further development transpired which indicated that a Charity would encapsulate the aims and objectives of the group. Hence, the current Alnwick Community Trust was registered with the Charity Commission in December 2021.

The current and past trustees are all volunteers, who give an inordinate amount of time to improve the town and support vulnerable people through a range of projects. Our funding comes from fees, one-off events, raffles, donations, and grant giving agencies including, Alnwick Town Council, Northumberland County Council, Community Foundation, Northumberland Estates, Communities Together, Rural Us, Sir James Knott, National Lottery, Northumberland Health, Northumbria Police, Alnwick Infirmary, Northumberland Lottery, and local businesses.

The two groups focussed on the community of Alnwick by introducing several disparate activities albeit sharing the common purpose of establishing the market town as a supportive and inspiring location for residents within the region. Examples of past and present activities include the creation of a Good Food Guide; the 'Percy' App: promoting a family walk around the town; An Alnwick Men's Group; Arts and Crafts events; Community Choir; An International Women's Day Event and 'A picnic in the park.' Several grant applications being applied for and successfully awarded (> £13,000) to support these



projects. In December 2021, the two groups were formally closed to become the current charity - Alnwick Community Trust. The trust was delighted to have Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland agree to become its in 2023.

PURPOSE OF ALNWICK COMMUNITY TRUST

- To promote social inclusion for the public benefit in Alnwick by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded and assisting them to integrate into society.

For the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or part of society, on the grounds of economic or social disadvantage.

- For the public benefit in Alnwick to provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the object of improving their conditions of life.

KEY ROLES

CHAIR	Joanne Smailes
VICE CHAIR	David Taylor
TREASURER	Julia Munford
VICE TREASURER	Annette Playle
SECRETARY	Claire Mitchell

CURRENT PROJECTS

JUST SING ALNWICK is a singing group formed in 2023. Singing is known to benefit our health and well-being and increasing studies suggest that this can enhance your mood, immune system, blood pressure, reduce feelings of chronic pain and is increasingly promoted as a positive activity for dementia sufferers.

The group has approximately forty members who meet every Thursday between 12.30 and 2.30 at St James Church located in the heart of Alnwick town centre. The location is fully accessible and supported by a kitchen area. This enables the group to socialise before the singing commences. The group supports members with dementia, autism, stroke, tinnitus, social anxiety, and depression. Session fees during 2023 and 2024 were £2. Members are provided with all the materials e.g. folders and song sheets as well as a complimentary t-shirt that they are asked to wear at any formal performances. The first two sessions are attended without cost and if any members require a carer they can also attend for free. Throughout the year the group have performed to the public at a variety of events including Alnwick Garden, local care and residential homes and Alnwick Story Fest.



Following a review, of costings associated with the group, the trustees have agreed that in 2025 session costs will rise to £3 per session. However, this cost will now also include refreshments at the start of each session and contribute toward a quarterly external charity donation (E.g. Alzheimer's Society, Cancer Research, RNIB). In the interest of fairness, each individual member will be asked to anonymously nominate a charity of their choice, these will be placed in 'a hat' and at the end of each quarter a charity will be drawn at random to receive a mutually agreed donation.

SHAPE SHIFTERS is an exercise group established in 2023 that meets every other Wednesday between 7 and 8pm. Fees for attendance being £2. The exercise is based on belly dancing which is known to be suitable for all age groups and abilities. As one of the oldest forms of dance the benefits of belly dancing are undeniable; belly dancing promotes balance and strength, improves digestion and co-ordination as well as being fun and highly expressive. During 2023 the group met at a conference room in a local bar within the centre of Alnwick. This room was offered to the trust without cost, as a gesture of thanks the group would briefly socialise after the session at the bar. However, at the start of 2024, the bar experienced a change in management. Despite numerous communication attempts to re-establish arrangements, the trust learned from members that they were being informed that classes were not taking (or had never taken) place at this location. Unfortunately, over time this significantly impacted on attendance rates. The trust have found an alternative but much smaller location which is also offered without cost. Therefore, although attendance is now sparse (around five people per session) current membership still value the exercise and socialisation and hence viewed the group as viable to still operate. The trust would like to thank the management of The Ale Gate public house for offering their meeting room at no cost for the shape shifter sessions to take place.

ALNWICK MEN'S GROUP meets every First and Third Monday of the month. It is a group for lonely or isolated men or just somewhere to keep warm in like-minded company. Managed by volunteers who take the members on trips, undertake art, play board games, have coffee, chats offer support, friendship, and kindness. This is a free entry project that was initially supported by 'Communities Together' grants. The group meets in the White Swan and the trust would like to thank the management for offering the use of their facilities at no cost.

LOVING ALNWICK GATEWAY. Loving Alnwick as a community group developed and maintained a patch of land near one of the main roundabouts leading to the town centre. This was close to the former chair's residence and once established was principally maintained by the Chair and her husband. Following, their residential relocation out of the area, it has been agreed that the 'Alnwick in Bloom' organisation will now use the space from 2025 onwards. Hence the Loving Alnwick Gateway will no longer be a project associated with Alnwick Community Trust.

TOWN GUIDES are a resolute team of volunteers who meet and greet visitors using the main town car parks. They usually undertake a two-hour shift at weekends during the tourist season and offer parking discs at a cost of £1 alongside distributing leaflets e.g. Good Food Guide, answer questions and direct people to attractions and eateries. Northumberland Council offer local organisations parking discs for a cost of £0.50 on the agreement that these are then offered to visitors at a standard cost of £1. It is estimated that approximately five thousand tourists per year engage with the Town Guides. The most dedicated town guides



being members of the Alnwick Men's Group who through engagement with the group have developed the confidence to undertake this role.

GOOD FOOD GUIDE. Each year the Trust produces five thousand updated copies of a Good Food Guide. The guide is a town centre map which highlights establishments that offer food and/or accommodation. Users are provided with a handy symbol-based guide to outline key facilities such as disabled access, dog friendly establishment, vegan options etc. All the Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés who wish to be included in this guide contribute to printing costs. Volunteers associated with the Trust then make distribute these guides either in person i.e. Town Guides or across key locations in the town. E.g. Library, Museum. It has always been a very welcome document to guide tourists to attractions and well-loved eating places.

PERCY LION TRAIL. This is a fun trail app for IOS phones which was developed during the pandemic to help families to start getting out in the fresh air together and start appreciating their environment again. The trail takes families around Alnwick encouraging them to seek out all the lion architecture. It is a fun App that includes both a children's fun story and provides adults with historical facts about the town. The app continues to be downloaded albeit in small numbers. Consideration will be given to either further investing in the App to be compatible with Android phones or working with other organisations within Alnwick to develop an alternative more wide-ranging product.

GETTING CRAFTY. The area of North Northumberland (and in particular Alnwick) is a popular tourist destination. There is also an emerging art scene across the wider area. This provides the trust with an opportunity to draw upon volunteers' skills to pass on their knowledge to other interested parties at low cost. This in turn potentially serves as a provision to promote forms of craft- based employment. In late 2023 and 2024, one example was the holding of a wreath making workshop. Workshops to make door wreaths are numerous within the region. However, many of these are costly, a typical workshop can be between £40 to £60, thus can be financially challenging. On the other hand, can be a valuable learning experience in floral artistry. Therefore, the trust through its network of volunteers were able to offer a workshop which rather than based on a fixed cost was offered on the basis of pay for what you use.

Both workshops attracted around a dozen participants cost whom with guidance from a facilitator produced wreaths for an average £12.50. However, it is recognised that this significant cost difference is partially due to a local public house offering facilities for free and access to volunteer gardens for the collection of greenery. As well as being a very cost-effective learning experience to participants, the workshops also raised modest additional funds for future projects within Alnwick Community Trust.

In 2025, it is anticipated that further craft workshops will be offered. For example, the Alnwick Men's Group have expressed interest in learning skills associated with stained glass.



POTENTIAL FUTURE PROJECTS

READING GROUP. In 2025, one of the trustees has agreed to lead a reading group. This reading group will be hosted in the Mind and Sole Hub - a growing charity base within Alnwick. Fees are still to be confirmed but these will be set to principally cover the room hire and refreshments. In order to improve participant accessibility, it is the intention to loan out for a small fee an eBook reader. This would allow those with either sight issues or dyslexia to set font type and size which meets their needs. The wreath workshop held in late November 2024 was able to raise enough funds for the purchase of one book reader. During 2025 additional funding sources will be sought for additional book readers and in order to further expand accessibility an “Audible” or similar subscription will be considered.

HOMIES. A BBC news report on 3 June 2024 noted the increasing number of families who have chosen to home educate their children. Mental Health and the wider impact of the pandemic noted as the main reason for this rise. Furthermore, an increasing number of parents noted how they felt schools were unable to meet children’s special educational needs with home education viewed as the only viable option. Home education is particularly prevalent in the North-East of England where a 27% rise was reported between 2020 and 2023. A couple of trustees have personal experience of this dilemma. As a result, it has been proposed that Alnwick Community Trust could initiate a weekly provision for parents and children who are home educated to exchange experiences, socialise, and play. Alnwick has several excellent locations that can enhance the home learning experience within a compact geographical area. This includes Alnwick Castle and Gardens, Alnwick Playhouse which houses the library and Barter Books – a famous second-hand bookstore. The trust would seek to hire a location close to these amenities and purchase a number of resources for the group (For example, Montessori inspired toys). It is anticipated that over time the group would become self-sustainable. However, there are some trustees/volunteers with educational academic backgrounds who could act as advisors to the group. It is recognised that due to the involvement of children, albeit accompanied by a guardian, any volunteers involved in the project will require enhanced DBS checks and funds to support the project will need to be raised. Initial research has begun in respect to potential grants that may support the establishment of this group.

This report has captured the activities of Alnwick Community Trust in 2024 and outlines how the trust expands to expand and flourish further in 2025. The following Appendix provides readers with an end of year financial statement for the charity.

Joanne Smailes
Chair
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ALNWICK COMMUNITY TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024



Alnwick Community Trust

Charity Number:
1197210

Receipts and Payments Accounts

Period Start 01/01/24 to Period End 31/12/24

Section A Receipts and Payments						
All to the nearest £						
A1 Receipts	Unrestricted	Restricted	Endowments	Total	Last Year	
Brought Forward	6010	401		6411	7195	
Donations to trust	528			528	1371	
Just Sing Alnwick	1765			1765	465	
Alnwick Men's Group	93			93		
Town Guides (Parking Discs)	314			314	531	
Percy Lion Trail	28			28		
Shape Shifters	183			183	652	
Getting Crafty	148			148	272	
Member Donations for Charity		138		138		
<i>Allstars Socials</i>					1554	
<i>Coronation Event</i>					864	
<i>Communities Grant</i>					2532	
<i>International Womens' Day</i>					1729	
<i>Sir James Knott</i>					3000	
<i>Community Foundation</i>					1550	
Sub Total (A1 Receipts)	9069	539		9608	21715	

ALNWICK COMMUNITY TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024



A3 Payments	Unrestricted	Restricted	Endowments	Total	Last Year
Loving Alnwick	335			335	293
Trust Admin: Equipment	106	37		143	
Trust Admin: Legal	243	20		263	678
Trust Admin: Publicity	90			90	449
Trust Admin: Stationary	424	217		641	1423
Getting Crafty: Equipment	67			67	
Charity Donations		50		50	
Just Sing: Equipment	20	45		65	2907
Just Sing: Room Hire	1152	47		1199	1336
Just Sing: Social Event	306			306	2821
Just Sing: Stationary	111	15		126	
Alnwick Men's Club: Social	156			156	654
Town Guides: Parking Discs	150			150	400
Reading Group: Equipment	80			80	
Shape Shifters: Equipment	28			28	259
<i>Training</i>					80
<i>International Women's Day</i>					2554
<i>Percy in park picnic</i>					50
<i>Coronation event</i>					660
<i>Refunds</i>					740
Sub Total (A3 Payments)	3268	431		3699	15304
Balance (Net of Receipts)	5801	108		5909	6411
A6 Cash Funds	16.18				

B5 Liabilities

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all
Trustees

Joanne
Smailes

Chair

ALNWICK COMMUNITY TRUST
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024
END OF REPORT

