



**Cumbria Rural Forum, supported by ACTion with Communities in Cumbria and Cumbria County Council, hosted a half day event under the title ‘Community Energy Champions’.**

**The purpose of this event was to publicise the National Energy Action ‘Energy Champions Toolkit’ and support available to communities addressing energy issues.**

## Introduction

The event was opened and chaired by Lorraine Smyth, Chief Executive Officer of ACTion with Communities in Cumbria.

Lorraine explained the role of Cumbria Rural Forum in exploring issues, sharing good practice and promoting local action.

## The Energy Champions Toolkit

Hellen Aitken of ACT provided an introduction to the NEA toolkit. This has been produced as a part of the FREE (Future of Rural Energy in England) project sponsored by CALOR.

The toolkit aims to provide a comprehensive and expert resource on how to deliver a local and effective fuel poverty ‘Energy Champions’ project, the aim for which might be “to develop and oversee an energy champions’ network to raise local awareness of energy efficiency and other related services and ensure households are signposted into local provision and are warm and healthy in their homes”.

### A Community Energy Champions Project aims to:

- Develop and oversee an energy champions network
- Raise awareness of energy efficiency
- Ensure local people are warm and healthy in their homes

The Toolkit describes a nine step process to developing and delivering community champions project, providing advice, techniques and materials that can be used to successfully achieve each step.

At each step, the toolkit suggests the process that might be followed, offers templates for events and activities and provides materials that explain, for example, the causes of fuel poverty and the relationship between cold homes and health. There are also materials that can be used to provide practical advice to individual householders.

The nine steps are detailed in a flow diagram at the end of the briefing. You can access the toolkit here: [www.nea.org.uk/see-us-in-action/calor-free-programme/free-toolkit](http://www.nea.org.uk/see-us-in-action/calor-free-programme/free-toolkit)

Hellen advised that there is support available for three communities that would like to pilot the toolkit. These haven’t been chosen yet so interested communities should get in touch with ACT.

## Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) and You

Caroline Turner of CAfS provided delegates with a review of the support that her organisation is able to provide to Energy Champions, including assistance with community led projects and training to give fuel bill and energy advice.

She explained that the role of CAfS is to:

- Promotes low carbon living, energy saving and reduced use of fossil fuels throughout Cumbria
- Provides information, advice and motivation through educational events site visits and practical projects

It is currently supporting a number of successful programmes including Green Build Week, Energy Ambassadors, professional training and community events.

The support available to Community Energy Champions will depend upon the type of project being proposed. Broadly these will fall in to one of three areas:

### Energy Efficiency

- Draught proofing roadshows
- Energy Champions training
- Draught proofing service and sale of products
- Demonstration kits and thermal camera hire

### Fuel Poverty (in addition to the above)

- Fuel bill clinics and Energy switching

### Renewable Generation

- Expert bank, Project officer support
- 3 days free consultancy
- Peer to peer support
- Training events
- Funded site visits
- Case studies and toolkits

Caroline advised that some of the services described are available free of charge in the Eden district. This is the result of financial support provided by the Lottery which reflects the high levels of fuel poverty in rural east Cumbria.

## Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation

Tom Barlow, the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Officer and Ian Baker of Tadea Ltd presented this session.

Tom opened by explaining that the Green Deal, funded through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), would provide a £36m contribution to energy efficiency improvements to Cumbrian housing stock, the objective being to reduce carbon emissions.

Ian went on to propose a Community ECO Challenge. He explained that Tadea is a not for profit company that exists to provide sustainable project management and advice in relation to:

- Energy Efficiency
- Insulation
- Energy Assessments
- Sustainable Transport
- Green Deal and ECO

Tadea is able to bring a model ECO finance, advice and data systems to communities that have a desire to reduce their energy usage.

Enthusiastic communities could benefit from Tadea help in developing a Community Energy Plan to deliver the greatest environmental impact and warmer, happier homes.

The challenge to delegates is to identify and engage communities in taking advantage of the funding and support available.

## Workshop - What does it mean to be an Energy Champion?

The workshop session invited delegates to explore five questions. The following bullets highlight some of the key points made.

### What is your motivation to be an Energy Champion for your community?

- **Community** – to bring benefit to my community, implement the community plan, neighbours working together.
- **Projects** – gathering info for a proposed hydro project, building on existing community ideas.
- **Local Authority (LA)** – member and officer commitment to reduce fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing, better understanding the LA role.
- **Research** – gathering information.

### What does that mean you will do?

- **Involvement** – recognise opportunities, get the community involved, raise awareness through local events, look at toolkit, pull data together, pass on useful information.
- **Local Authority** – look at how to involve my ward/division, work out how my LA fit in, obtain the data people need, circulate information to parish councils.
- **Projects** site visits to existing schemes, research relevant data (land ownership).
- **Community** – develop a model for rural delivery, talk to households and businesses about energy efficiency, find key communities to work on ECO projects.
- **Communication** – flag up issues through our websites, newsletters, members briefings, direct people to Tadea, signposting and advocacy.

## What support will you need and where do you think you can get it from?

- **Clarity** – its all very confusing, make it simple, a clear definition of who can help, bamboozled by the number of agencies and initiatives, there's a lot of guidance but this can result in information overload.
- **Information** – about fuel poverty, real life solutions, health implications of fuel poverty, funding, initiatives, how schools fit in, potential savings, fuel and money.
- **Funding** – to pay local people to provide information and advice (village agent model), for project funding, publicity material, project officer time, for travel costs, expenses.
- **Help** – getting engaged, accessing information and expert advice, identifying hard to heat homes.
- **Coordination** – central referral/reference point, simple route to funding, demystifying ECO and Green Deal.

## What support can you offer?

- **Networks** – knowledge of local communities, organisations, local authorities, Parish Councils.
- **Expertise** – Relevant experience e.g. mechanical engineering, properties, housing, advice lines on e.g. energy efficiency, ECO, Green Deal.
- **Examples** – real life successes and failures.
- **Publicity** – websites, newsletters, member briefings, press.

## What gaps do you see?

- **Funding** – for project officers, energy champions.
- **Advice** – easily identified sources, data/information pooling, engagement with energy companies to access/use their data.

- **Engagement** – with busy young families, health sector, social landlords, schools, youth groups.
- **Simplicity** – simple narrative for ECO, Green Deal, funding, support and advice.

## What next?

- ACT will deliver the pilot project on Energy Champions and share the results
- Cumbria Rural Forum will ask partners to produce clearer guidance and a contact and referral sheet for communities wanting to be involved.
- Cumbria Rural Forum will revisit this issue with partners to gauge the impact in rural Cumbria.

## Conference Speakers

**Lorraine Smyth** - ACTion with Communities in Cumbria

**Hellen Aitken** - ACTion with Communities in Cumbria

**Caroline Turner** - Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS)

**Tom Barlow** - Cumbria Affordable Warmth Project

**Ian Baker** - Tadea Ltd

## More information

Speakers from the event can be contacted via ACT and presentation information can be viewed on our website: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

For more information about Cumbria Rural Forum contact ACT's Dani Hudson on Tel: 01768 869511

**For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01768 840827 or visit our website: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)**

## ACT champions community and rural issues

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# NEA's Nine point flowchart to start an Energy Champions Network

